

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

## How Bolsheviks championed self-determination in Ukraine

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## 400 at Utah event mark 20 years since Wilberg mine disaster

*Bosses' drive 'to make the almighty dollar' killed workers, says mother of deceased miner*

BY CECELIA MORIARITY  
AND JOEL BRITTON

CASTLEDALE, Utah—About 400 people—area coal miners and others—gathered at Emery High School here December 19 for a “Wilberg Disaster Remembrance Tribute.”

The event took place on the 20th anniversary of the fire at the Wilberg mine—located outside Orangeville, Utah—that claimed the lives of 19 miners, members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 2176, and eight executives and foremen of the Emery Mining Corporation.

Sally Walls, the mother of a miner who died in the fire, told the *Deseret Morning News* that it was the bosses' greed, “just to make the almighty dollar, just to break a record,” that killed her son Lester and the others who died at Wilberg 20 years ago.

UMWA District 22 sponsored the tribute. It featured presentations by UMWA president Cecil Roberts, the union's safety director Joe Main, and Congressman Jim Matheson.

Warren Oviatt, a miner retired from Wil-

berg and president of UMWA Local 2176, opened the meeting. He noted that 22 U.S. coal miners were killed on the job in 2003, the lowest figure since the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) started keeping records. But, he added, 25 have been killed so far this year. “We strive for zero,” Oviatt said, pointing to the fact that “a younger generation born since the Wilberg disaster is now coming into the mines.... This is a challenge for us, to remember what happened and to fight to make it better.”

UMWA international at-large vice president Mike Dalpiaz presided over a candle ceremony during which 27 candles were lit by UMWA international, district, regional, and local officials in memory of the 27 people who died in the Wilberg disaster. Many family members of the fallen miners were present, often including children and grandchildren.

In introducing Roberts, Dalpiaz noted that the UMWA president had recently returned from China where he had offered the help of U.S. miners in response to the

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## Killings of civilians in Iraqi cities show desperation of Baathist forces

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Two car bombings December 19 in the majority Shiite cities of Najaf and Karbala killed nearly 70 people and wounded as many as 175. Iraqi officials said police have arrested 50 suspects in the bombings, and banned cars from entering sections of downtown Najaf in an effort to prevent similar attacks.

The bombings were aimed at Iraqi civilians, especially Shiites, who were targets of widespread repression under the former Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. The one in Najaf took place in the middle of a funeral procession and the attack in Karbala occurred at the city's bus terminal. The nature of the attacks and the reaction to them inside Iraq indicate the increasing isolation of the “insurgency,” which lost its base in Fallujah since the city's takeover by the U.S. occupation forces in mid-November. These bombings also show that the attempts by Baathists and their allies to stop the march toward the U.S.-orchestrated elections for an Iraqi national assembly are becoming more desperate.

Statements by U.S. and Iraqi officials and actions by most political forces in Iraq

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## PLO leader Abbas calls for end to armed struggle

BY PAUL PEDERSON

“The use of weapons in the current intifada is damaging and must cease,” said Mahmoud Abbas in a December 14 interview with *Asharq al Awsat*, an Arabic-language daily published in London. Abbas, the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), is the leading candidate for president of the Palestinian Authority in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. His remarks signaled the desire of a dominant faction of the PLO to put a formal end to the intifada, or uprising, that began in September 2000.

The Palestinian Authority wants to “stop the military aspect of the intifada, especially by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, in order to achieve our objective of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and a just settlement for the refugee problem,” Abbas told the daily.

“We want to negotiate,” he later told reporters.

Two days later, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon gave a major policy speech outlining Tel Aviv's aims to open negotiations with the new Palestinian leadership.

“The most genuine and greatest oppor-

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AFP/Getty Images/Ahmad al-Rubaye

Damage from December 19 bombing in Najaf that killed 52 Iraqi civilians

## Utah coal miners vote for union



Militant/Teri Moss

Co-Op miners and union organizers gather at town hall parking lot in Huntington, Utah, 6:30 a.m. December 17, prior to union representation election. Left, back: UMWA organizers Roy Fernández and Bob Butero. From left, front: Ricardo Chávez, Alyson Kennedy, Berthila León, Servando Rodríguez, José Contreras, Apolonio Acosta, Jesús Salazar, Raymundo Silva, Miguel Bojorquez, Juan Salazar (kneeling), Avel Olivas, Jesús Leyva, and Ana María Sánchez.

BY PAT MILLER

HUNTINGTON, Utah—It was 6:30 a.m. December 17 when 25 Co-Op miners met at the parking lot of the town hall here. It was dark and cold but the coal miners' spirits were high. After a 15-month struggle they were finally going to cast their ballots in a union representation election for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

All the miners gathered that morning had recently been fired by the Kingstons, the capitalist family that owns the Co-Op mine on the outskirts of Huntington. One week before the union election, C.W. Mining, which operates the mine, discharged nearly 30 foreign-born workers for supposedly not having proper work documents.

The miners, some of whom have worked at Co-Op up to a decade, readily point out they have the same papers they showed the company when they were hired and under which they have worked for C.W. Mining throughout their employment.

“Whenever you have a group of immigrants, there's an assumption that some of them may be undocumented,” UMWA organizer Bob Guilfoyle told the press on the eve of the election. “We don't know. We've never asked, and it's none of our business as far as we're concerned. These are our brother and sister miners. They're workers just like we are. The fact that they were willing to stand up and draw a line in

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## Foreign investors nervous about Russia after auction of oil giant

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The controversy surrounding the December 19 public auction of the main subsidiary of the Yukos Oil Co. in Russia illustrates the conflicts among capitalist investors from abroad and local wanna-be capitalists, former and current bureaucrats included. The fight, with all its crudeness, is one over primitive accumulation of capital, over who among the ruling layers in Russia will become owners of the country's vast, formerly nationalized assets.

For Washington and other major imperialist powers, investments in Russia, with its large industrial base and major natural resources—including oil, gas, coal, and many minerals—have been viewed as a potentially attractive proposition down the road if a stable capitalist regime and “rule of law” is established. But investors from imperialist countries are becoming more nervous about their ability to even get their capital back, let alone transforming it into a profit-making venture.

At the center of the most recent conflict is the Russian government's decision to dismantle Yukos, the country's largest oil producer. Yukos's major subsidiary—the Yuganskneftegaz unit—was placed on the auction block to recover some of the \$28 billion the Kremlin claims it is owed in back taxes. Yukos employs 130,000 workers in 60 Russian cities, pumps nearly 20 percent of all Russian oil, and supplies 2

percent of the world's consumption. Its huge subsidiary alone pumps as much oil a day as all of Indonesia, and more than OPEC member Qatar.

The founder of Yukos and its main shareholder, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, has increasingly come into conflict with the grouping of government bureaucrats led by Russian president Vladimir Putin. Khodorkovsky, a banker who took con-

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# Quebec: workers strike provincial liquor board

BY JOE YATES

MONTREAL—“What’s important in the strike is that I can have a quality of life so that I can spend time with my daughter,” said Frédéric. “Tuesday and Wednesday are my days off when my daughter is at school. Therefore I can’t see her. The weekend I work from noon to 10:00 p.m.”

Frédéric, who asked that his last name not be used, is one of the 3,800 workers who have been on strike against the Quebec Liquor Board (SAQ) since November 19. He spoke to this *Militant* reporter outside a December 8 meeting where 2,500 workers discussed the company’s latest offer and rejected it by 88 percent.

Negotiations began on Nov. 3, 2002. Like Frédéric, 68 percent of the SAQ workers are part-time. Many are students. They are members of SEMB, the union of store and office workers at SAQ.

“Basically we are not asking for a lot: only decent schedules,” said Dean DiMaelo, who has worked at the SAQ for 30 years. “We like our work and want to go back inside.” One of the central demands of the union is that permanent employees be guaranteed at least one day off on the weekend.

In the new contract, the SAQ is proposing that workers be assigned to only one store instead of a division that has five or six stores. The union says that this undermines seniority because it could cause senior employees to lose several hours of work when there is a slowdown in sales.

Another important issue in the strike is the growing practice by the SAQ to contract with private agencies to supply liquor. The union says that this is a form of contracting out their jobs. The SAQ is proposing annual 2 percent wage increases for a contract that would end in 2011.

In an attempt to undermine the strike, the government-owned company is keeping 50

out of 400 stores open with managers. On December 11, a company official claimed that the SAQ had made 84 percent of its regular sales the week before.

The Christmas season is when the SAQ has its biggest sales. With this in mind, the strikers are picketing stores that are open to try to convince customers not to go in. Many people are buying at these stores, but there are also signs of support for the strike, like cars honking.

The company has hired security guards and there have been some confrontations in front of stores. On December 14, 150 unionists mobilized as the SAQ opened a major outlet in Montreal to the public. Police intervened to allow customers to enter the store.

Jérôme Bouchard, a 26-year-old part-time worker, told the *Militant*, “I voted against the offer because there wasn’t much for us. Before the strike I didn’t think that the split between the bosses and the union was so big. Now, seeing the security agents and the intimidation, I will never see the company the same way. I see more the importance of being part of a union.”

## Quebec poultry workers in 4th month of strike



Militant/Sylvie Charbin

MONTREAL—December 16 union Christmas party marked the third month on strike by members of the Volailles Marvid Workers’ Union, affiliated with the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN). On November 30, the poultry workers voted overwhelmingly to reject the company’s first contract proposal since the contract expired in December 2003. The offer made no mention of guaranteed work hours. Following the opening of a new production line a few months ago, the workweek has been reduced to an average of 20 hours, which is not even guaranteed, strikers report. The unionists have been on strike since September 13.

—SYLVIE CHARBIN

## Iraq: prisoner abuse by U.S. forces didn’t end at Abu Ghraib

BY SAM MANUEL

Four members of a U.S. Special Operations Task Force received administrative punishment last summer for their role in the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, according to the Pentagon. Classified military documents released December 7 show that abuse of Iraqis detained by U.S. military forces continued after revelations of torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison emerged in April.

According to the December 9 *Washington Post*, Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita said four members of Task Force 6-26, a Special Operations unit assigned to hunt down leaders of the Baathist regime in Iraq, used Taser guns on prisoners during interrogations in June. The guns fire an electrically charged projectile into the victim’s skin, which is designed to deliver an incapacitating shock. The Pentagon declined to give details of the sanctions against the task force members but said the punishments did not include criminal penalties.

Defense Department officials said that reports on the abuse had been filed with the Army’s criminal investigation division. They said they could not explain why no criminal charges had been brought, the *Post* reported.

The Pentagon’s revelation about the sanctions came one day after the American Civil Liberties Union released 43 classified military documents about ongoing abuse of Iraqis by U.S. military personnel. The documents were obtained by the civil liberties group under the Freedom of Information Act despite vigorous opposition from the Bush administration. The documents are posted on the group’s web site.

One of the documents is a June 25 “Info Memo” from Vice Admiral Lowell Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, to Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone. The memo states that Defense Department interrogators assigned to work with a Special Operations task force reported that prisoners arriving from temporary detention centers in Baghdad had burn marks on their backs, bruised bodies, and complained of kidney pains.

The prisoners were detained and interrogated by the task force, also known as TF 6-26. One of the Defense Department interrogators, the memo says, watched as members of the task force punched a prisoner in the face to the point the individual needed medical attention. The interrogator in this instance was asked by task force members to leave the room, according to the memo.

Jacoby wrote that one of the interrogators took photos of the prisoner’s injuries in order to record them. When he showed the photos to the task force supervisor they were confiscated. The Defense Department interrogators were threatened by the TF 6-

26 supervisor, and told not to talk to anyone about what they had seen. They were also ordered not to leave the compound without specific permission, “even to get a haircut at the PX.” Keys to their vehicles were confiscated.

According to the *Post*, the interrogators said that TF 6-26 members also slapped prisoners during interrogations. In one instance the task force detained a 28-year-old Iraqi mother who had a 6-month old nursing baby at home with the object of compelling the surrender of her husband, suspected of “terrorism.”

One of the documents obtained by the ACLU describes clashes between military interrogators at U.S.-run prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and FBI and Defense Department agents. The Defense Department and FBI personnel supposedly complained that the military’s methods might be illegal, in addition to being ineffective in producing reliable information. Both sides agreed, however, that each had their own way of doing things.

In another document, an FBI agent who had repeatedly observed detainees who had been stripped naked and placed in isolation in Abu Ghraib said he made no protest because it seemed no different from strip searches at prisons in the United States. The agent, whose name is deleted from the document, said he was aware that sleep deprivation was used to force prisoners to talk but added he was not sure if that was illegal. Defense Department officials have defended the practice, said the *Post*. The daily also noted that the U.S. State Department’s annual accounting of human rights abuses by other governments has traditionally described sleep deprivation as a form of torture.

### ‘Militant’ holiday schedule

This is a two-week issue. The ‘Militant’ will not publish next week. Our editorial and business offices will be closed from December 25 through January 1.

## THE MILITANT

### Independence for Puerto Rico

*The ‘Militant’ explains why independence of Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule is in the interests of the vast majority —working people. It brings you coverage of the fight to release Puerto Rican political prisoners from U.S. jails and labor struggles such as the current water workers’ strike. Don’t miss a single issue!*



Puerto Rican nationalist Juan Segarra Palmer at airport in San Juan after his release from U.S. jail Jan. 23, 2004.

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# China: 12,000 strike for higher pay at factory supplying Wal-Mart

BY DOUG NELSON

Production has been halted at the Japanese-owned Uniden factory in Shenzhen, China, since 12,000 workers there, mostly young women, walked off the job December 10 demanding higher wages and an end to abusive conditions, reported the *New York Times*.

Uniden is a Japanese-owned wireless phone manufacturer.

Its main customer, Wal-Mart, agreed November 23 to allow unions in its 39 Chinese stores, which employ 20,000 people. The decision came after the All-China Federation of Trade Unions threatened to sue the U.S.-based retail giant.

According to the *Times*, workers at Uniden said they work 11-hour days and earn a monthly salary of 484 yuan, about \$58. They spend nearly half of that on housing in the company dormitories. Most of the workers have recently arrived from the countryside. Like tens of thousands of fellow working people, they are resisting

bad working conditions.

“If you get sick, they won’t give you leave unless it is very serious,” said Liu Shuangyan, a worker at the plant who is a native of Hunan province.

The factory has no union, something workers say they want to change. “If there were a union, things would be fairer for us,” a 32-year-old worker from Henan province, told the *Times*. “Right now, one person says one thing, another complains about another, and the boss doesn’t listen to anything.”

One possible spark in the walkout was the company’s recent firing of workers with seniority to make way for replacements whom the company could pay less.

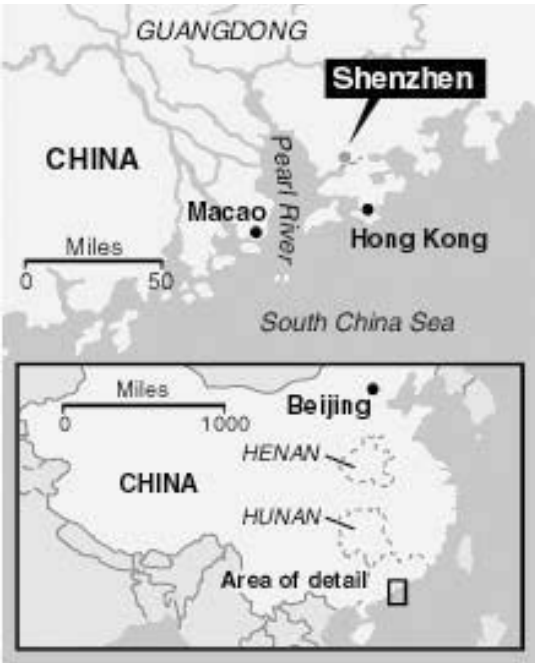
Workers said their most important demands are a shorter workweek and the enforcement of minimum wage laws.

Workers held a one-day strike at the same factory four years ago, protesting low wages and alleged beatings by a supervisor, according to an article in the

*South China Morning Post*. The workers ended the strike when the accused supervisor was transferred and the company agreed to increase wages.

Press reports indicate labor actions are becoming more common among migrant workers in the area. Liu Kaiming, who studies conditions of migrant workers in Guangdong province, told the *Times*, “The migrant workers have learned to protest with their feet, they are more capable of negotiating, and they can choose not to work. That has especially been true recently, with a lot of the migrant workers who were born in the 1980s entering the workforce. They’ve had a better education, they’re young and emotional, and they’ve been emboldened by media reports about their conditions to demand their rights.”

Striking Uniden workers told the *Times*



Workers walked out December 10 at Japanese-owned factory in Shenzhen, China, that produces telephones for U.S. retail giant Wal-Mart.

they are not afraid of losing their jobs, as workers are in short supply in Shenzhen’s large manufacturing zone.

## Walkout by water workers in Puerto Rico stays solid

BY LAURA GARZA

BOSTON—Members of the Independent Authentic Union (UIA) at the Puerto Rican Water and Sewer Authority (AAA) met in Loiza, Puerto Rico, December 13 and voted to continue their strike in spite of claims by management that negotiations are over and the final offer of the government will now be implemented. “Our membership has shown an extraordinary capacity and we do not regret what we have done,” said Héctor René Lugo, president of the union. Before the vote, some members of Puerto Rico’s incoming legislature said that if the workers returned to their jobs some new money could be given to the water authority to help meet union demands.

The 4,300 workers walked out October 4 after management unilaterally cut payments to the union-run health plan, setting up a private fund instead, claiming this was necessary because of misuse of funds by the union. The workers, who last received a raise in July 2002, have also rejected management’s claims that there is no money for anything but a paltry wage increase.

Days before the December 13 union meeting, 11 UIA leaders were indicted on tax evasion charges. They were released on \$100,000 bail each. Those facing charges based on the Justice Department investigation into government allegations of fraud and corruption in the health-care plan include the president of the union and the heads of seven UIA regional locals. A preliminary hearing has been set for December 28.

AAA is reported to be spending \$2 million a month for overtime to almost 800 management personnel and for the heavy presence of more than 1,000 police used at various work sites.

Management is also trying to force some professional workers to report for work at AAA’s central office. About 200 members of the Independent Brotherhood of Professional Employees at AAA—engineers and other specialists—initially honored UIA

picket lines. A few weeks into the strike, they began reporting for work at outlying offices. Management sent notices insisting they report to their usual work sites, and made a big show out of loading 80 of these employees onto buses and bringing them, under heavy police escort, into AAA’s central offices. The strikers have a large presence outside that office.

The day before the Loiza union meeting, about 50 women strikers marched to the

governor’s mansion with signs demanding a just contract and to show their support for the walkout in face of demands that they simply return to work. The unionists, who have been getting \$600 a month in strike benefits, also just received their normal yearly bonuses, in the range of about \$2,000. While this offers some relief from mounting bills, the government is hoping to lure more strikers to cross picket lines, dangling the \$1,800 bonus they would get if they report for work.

## Bulgaria gov’t: U.S. military bases –Welcome!

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

The government of Bulgaria has announced it is ready to welcome U.S. military bases on the country’s soil.

“We are expecting that at the end of January or the beginning of February the U.S. State Department and Congress will decide about stationing American troops in Bulgaria and that it will be positive,” the country’s defense minister, Nikolay Svinarov, told the newspaper *Trud* December 3 in Sofia, the country’s capital.

Svinarov said this is important because Bulgaria, which joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 2004, is “the eastern boundary of NATO right now and very soon Bulgaria is going to be the eastern boundary of the European Union (EU).” Sofia has applied to join the EU and hopes to do so in 2007.

The Bulgarian parliament has backed the

move. It stated in December that it “supports the redeployment of American forces in military bases abroad and approves of the consultations already begun on the issue between the United States and Bulgaria.”

For Washington, this is part of repositioning U.S. forces in Europe away from bases in Germany, where they had been concentrated during the Cold War, and farther to the east—including eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

Sofia has built a record of military cooperation with Washington, sending troops as part of the NATO forces in Kosova, and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to Bulgaria’s defense ministry sources, *Trud* said, Washington is considering leasing the airfields Graf Ignatiev near the southern city of Plovdiv, Bezmer near Yambol in the southeast, and Sarafovo near the Black Sea port of Bourgas, as well

as the Novo Selo military base near Sliven. The Pentagon has already used Sarafovo, where U.S. KC-135 refueling tanker aircraft and more than 200 troops were based during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The main task of the U.S. bases in Bulgaria would be “providing support in air-to-air refueling of airplanes in the region of the Black Sea,” Svinarov said, according to Agence France-Presse, with about 500 U.S. troops on the ground. They would be “totally different compared to the U.S. bases that have been located in western Europe and more particularly in Germany after World War II,” he added, which were “base towns and base cities” with tens of thousands of U.S. troops and their families stationed there for years or decades. The bases in Bulgaria will be “small and provisionally used,” said Gen. Nikola Kolev, Bulgaria’s chief army commander.

“Why do we need a joint force to be in Germany, where there’s nothing happening?” said a U.S. military official, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. “You have to have troops close to ports and airfields that are closer to the action. And you also want to have them in a place where people agree with what you’re doing, so they don’t shut down ports and they don’t shut down airfields.”

The government of Turkey refused to allow U.S. ground troops to use its soil to invade Iraq from the north in March 2003. In April of that year, the Pentagon withdrew 30 of the 80 aircraft and almost half the 4,500 troops from the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey.

In addition to Bulgaria, the Pentagon plans to build facilities in neighboring Romania, at the Mihail Kogalniceanu air base and the Black Sea port of Constanta, both of which were used to ferry troops and equipment into Iraq. It also plans to take over military training grounds and firing ranges in Hungary and Poland, which were used in the past by forces of the former Soviet Union.

Under the “lily pad” vision of the Pentagon, these new bases will be staffed with limited numbers of highly mobile units that would be deployed without their families for six-month rotations. This is part of the overall “transformation” of the U.S. military into smaller, more agile, and more lethal brigades that are being located closer to theaters of conflict and are being trained and equipped for deployment at a moment’s notice.

## EU agrees to membership talks with Turkey

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The European Union voted December 17 to start membership talks with Turkey. The negotiations will begin Oct. 3, 2005, and are expected to drag on for at least a decade. EU officials made clear that the talks would be “open-ended,” without any guarantee of eventual EU membership.

The decision was made after leaders of the 25-member bloc backed down from their demand that Ankara immediately recognize Cyprus as an independent country. Instead, the government of Turkey agreed to extend an existing trade accord to the 10 EU members that joined in May, which include Cyprus. This Mediterranean island was divided in 1974 following an attempt by the then-military government of Greece to annex the island. Seizing the moment, the rulers of Turkey invaded and occupied the northern third of the country.

Commenting on the EU leaders’ decision, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, “We’re at a point where we’re reaping the reward of 41 years of work. The process from now on will be even more difficult.”

Making it clear that many roadblocks lie ahead in these talks, French president Jacques Chirac said, “These are negotiations in which each of the member states can make up their own mind from the start to the end of the talks and could at any moment

put an end to these negotiations.” Chirac has promised to hold a national referendum in France to decide on whether to allow Turkey to join the EU. According to recent opinion polls, a majority in France opposes accepting Turkey into EU membership.

Politicians and pundits in Europe have argued that Ankara’s entry into the EU would allow Muslims to predominate against “Christendom.” “Do we really want the riverbed of Islam to enter the riverbed of secularism?” said French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin in a September 23 interview.

“The integration of Turkey is the breakdown of the European project,” said Hervé Morin, a member of the French parliament from the Union for French Democracy party. “We don’t have a common history, culture, or vision. The European identity is built on a common history, a Judeo-Christian culture, and culture of human rights and the enlightenment ideas.”

Turkey, a largely agricultural country with 71 million inhabitants, is more populous than any current EU member, while its per capita income is roughly one-third of the average of longtime EU member states.

Its admittance into the bloc would exacerbate one of the deepest conflicts within the European Union—over the so-called Common Agricultural Policy. Under this policy, farm products of EU member states are subsidized. The subsidies primarily benefit

big capitalist farmers. While erecting tariffs and other trade barriers against goods from semicolonial nations, agribusiness in the EU dumps these cheap agricultural goods on the markets of semicolonial countries, decimating the livelihoods of peasants in those countries. In 2002, the unequal application of the farm subsidy policy between the wealthy imperialist nations in the EU and the others became a stumbling block for 10 governments, mainly from eastern Europe, which had applied for membership but were told they would not receive an equal subsidy. In the end, they accepted a package of subsidies that amount to 25 percent of what other member states are entitled to. Parity would not be forthcoming until 2013, at best.

Washington has campaigned for Turkish entry in order to weaken the European Union, which was originally centered around a French-German bloc—what U.S. officials sometimes refer to as “Old Europe”—to better compete against U.S. imperialism for domination of the world’s markets and resources. Ankara has blocked with Washington to prevent the imperialist governments of “Old Europe” from developing an EU military force that could be effective independently of the U.S.-dominated NATO. Turkey, a NATO member, has an army larger than any of the EU members and its military budget is exceeded only by Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.



# Miners vote for union

**Continued from front page**

the sand with this employer—I think a lot of people admire their courage.”

At the town hall, miners checked over their lists to see if everyone eligible to vote was on hand. They made phone calls to the few miners who were late and organized other miners to go pick them up. Once leaders of the union effort were convinced that everybody who could have possibly assembled was there, the miners gathered for a photo for the media and then proceeded in a car caravan up the canyon to the mine.

The mood among the miners once they arrived in front of the bathhouse voting station at the mine was festive. They joked about all of the Kingston family members showing up to vote, and congratulated one another for having gotten this far in the struggle.

“I feel very positive about the vote,” said Jesús Leyva, one of the recently fired miners. “We organized ourselves, going in as a group to vote. We showed we were strong.” Miners reported by the end of the voting day that all but one of the workers they were counting on to turn out and help win the election for the UMWA had voted.

Region 27 of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) had ruled that no Kingston family members or supervisory personnel could vote in the election. But the owners and the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), which miners say is run by the company, appealed the local board’s ruling to the national NLRB. As a result, miners estimated, more than 100 Kingston family members and management personnel voted. Their ballots, however, were sealed until a decision is made about the Kingston and IAUWU appeal. Similarly, all but a few of the miners’ ballots were challenged by the bosses and those were also placed in sealed envelopes. UMWA organizers told this reporter they expected all but a handful of ballots would be challenged before the end of the voting.

The results won’t be announced until these challenges are resolved. Workers had three choices on the ballot: UMWA, IAUWU, or neither.

The Co-Op bosses seemed irritated by the buoyant mood among the miners. Several foremen could be seen staring at the assembled workers outside the bathhouse. When the miners started pointing at them and joking among themselves about which supervisors were at the window, the bosses turned out the lights so they could continue watching but not be seen.

“We don’t expect an early resolution,” said Bob Butero, UMWA Region 4 director. “Our job now is to try to keep things together, which includes helping miners get other work and do fund-raising to relieve the

financial strains until this is resolved.”

Shortly after the miners cast their ballots the morning of December 17, Emery County sheriff’s deputies could be seen going around the neighborhoods here serving court papers. Seventeen Co-Op miners and the UMWA are being sued in federal court for “unfair labor practices” and “defaming” the owners of the mine.

## Further company harassment

Other labor organizations—including the AFL-CIO, AFSCME Council 6, PACE union, and United Auto Workers—are also named as defendants. The *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News*—Utah’s two main dailies—and the *Militant* are cited as well. These defendants are being sued for defamation of the Kingstons, based on either expressing some kind of support for the Co-Op miners or printing articles that quote groups and individuals who support the miners.

The original complaint filed by the Kingstons’ lawyers in federal court in September has now been amended. The new complaint aims to rewrite the story of the strike, Co-Op miners say, and more sharply go after the UMWA and others who have backed the miners’ fight. In an effort to split those supporting the miners, the Kingston’s attorneys have dropped a number of defendants named in the earlier version of the lawsuit. Those no longer cited include all entities related to the Catholic Church, the local newspapers in Carbon and Emery counties, and a number of individual activists who have supported the miners over the past 15 months.

The amended Kingston complaint now accuses the UMWA through one of its “agents” of misrepresenting the actions of the Co-Op mine bosses when they fired Bill Estrada, one of the UMWA backers at the mine, on Sept. 22, 2003.

The lawsuit reads: “On or about September 22, 2004 [sic] CWM [C. W. Mining] suspended Bill Estrada with intent to terminate for cause. Estrada did not seek IAUWU’s help or otherwise challenge his termination through the grievance process of IAUWU’s collective bargaining agreement. While management was meeting with Estrada, some of the workers gathered outside. When Estrada left the meeting he falsely told the waiting workers they had also been fired. This was a material misrepresentation of a presently existing fact, which Estrada made either intentionally or with reckless disregard of its truth or falsity. Estrada intended that the workers would rely on his misrepresentation, which they did reasonably rely on to their detriment by, among other things, leaving their jobs, and engaging in a wildcat strike. At all pertinent times Estrada was UMWA’s agent.”

# 20 years since Wilberg mine disaster

**Continued from front page**

terrible accidents where many coal miners lost their lives.

“It is important to remember that 100,000 U.S. coal miners have been killed in mining accidents in the past century,” Roberts said. He added that another 100,000 have died from black lung and “other debilitating diseases caused by coal mining.” This has been “so our nation can prosper,” Roberts stated. Many factories, ballparks, and computers would go dark without coal for electricity, he said.

Noting that all but two of those who died in the Wilberg fire were in their 20s and 30s, Roberts urged that everyone remember the fallen miners’ co-workers and pay tribute to the mine rescue teams. That day’s *Salt Lake Tribune* highlighted the rescue efforts in some detail in a special front-page feature titled, “The Wilberg mine disaster, a remembrance.”

The same day’s *Deseret Morning News* front-page feature was headlined, “Pain, anger linger from Wilberg—Some blame greed for Utah mine fire 20 years ago that killed 27.” Both papers included maps of the mines and where the bodies of the dead miners had been found.

The *Tribune* article described “a crew swelled to twice its normal size—including senior management—for what promised to be a big production run.” It noted that “MSHA had allowed Emery Mining Co....to continue mining 5th Right [a section of the mine] despite two cave-ins that

rendered the tunnel impassable.”

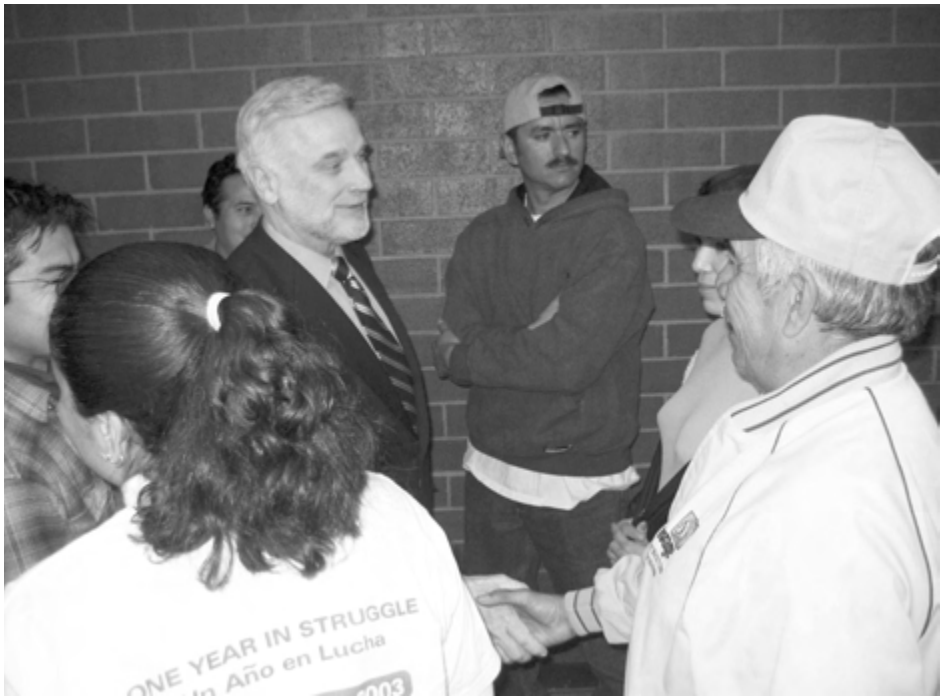
The *News* article reported that Emery bosses were “in pursuit of a 24-hour production record.” Dalpiaz was quoted as saying, “They got two world’s records—one for production and one for killing the most people” in a Utah mine fire.

Sally Walls told the *News* that she visits the UMWA monument to those who died at Wilberg regularly. “Maybe it’s so hard to adjust to losing Les because it was out of greed and stupidity, just to make the almighty dollar, just to break a record,” she said, referring to her son Lester who died in the fire. “If they had cleaned out Six Right, every one of them men would have had a way out of there.”

The roof fall in the section of the mine called Six Right had occurred in October 1984, about two months before the disaster. MSHA had allowed the company to operate despite the threat to safety.

Matheson, whose 2nd Congressional District in Utah includes Carbon and Emery counties where the state’s coal production is centered, referred to how that day in 1984 was to be “a landmark day for production” at the mine. He pointed out that it took years for MSHA to mandate “mining reforms.”

Matheson also spoke about the union-organizing struggle of the Co-Op miners. “I am closely looking at the situation at the Co-Op mine where most of the miners were fired,” Matheson said. “I have informed the National Labor Relations Board that we expect a fair election result.”



Militant/Pat Miller

**UMWA president Cecil Roberts (center, with tie) greets Co-Op miners at December 19 event in Castledale, Utah, marking the 20th anniversary of the Wilberg mine disaster. From left: Bill Estrada, José Contreras (behind Roberts), Juan Salazar, Berthila León, Ricardo Chávez, and Ana María Sánchez (with back to camera).**

The complaint further states, “The workers have claims against UMWA and its agents including Estrada for unfair labor practices, fraud, intentional interference with their present and prospective economic relationships with CWM and IAUWU, civil conspiracy, and possibly other claims. Defendants Aguilar, Chavez, Hector and Natividad Flores, Daniel and Guillermo Hernandez, Kennedy, Leon, Olivas, Panduro, Rodriguez, Gonzalo, Jesus and Jose Juan Salazar, Sanchez, and Villa [the 16 Co-Op miners who are being sued along with Estrada] in particular have cross claims against UMWA and its agents under the above legal theories for lost wages and punitive damages, as well as claims for indemnity on any judgment that may be entered against them in this action. Pursuant to Utah Rules of Professional Conduct... this gives rise to an irreconcilable conflict of interest that precludes attorneys from representing UMWA and its agents and also representing the workers in this action.”

“The Kingstons are attempting to rewrite history and obscure what miners have been fighting for over the past 15 months,” Bill Estrada told the press, responding to these allegations. “The miners were responding not only to my firing but to two other disciplinary actions by the bosses against workers in the days preceding my firing. After I was fired, the miners as a group were making their opinions known to the bosses that I should be put back on the job, and refusing to back down. That’s when management called the cops, ordered all of the miners off the property, and locked us out.”

Twenty Co-Op miners made the trip here from the Huntington area to take part in the tribute.

“The Wilberg bosses were the same as the Co-Op bosses,” said Co-Op miner Juan Salazar. “They push us to go faster and work harder to increase production. This is the same as what the Wilberg bosses were doing. When they neglect safety to make profits this leads to injuries and death.

“We were honored to be part of this commemoration,” Salazar added. “Miners have to be united around safety—it is a question of life and death for us. It is obvious that the companies put economic concerns above this.”

When UMWA safety director Joe Main spoke, also having recently returned from China, he said, “Miners unnecessarily lost their lives” at Wilberg, but “they did not die in vain.” He referred to changes in mining practices adopted after the fire. He also spoke of the eight-foot-high granite monument the UMWA erected near the mine.

After volunteers served 425 “lite meals” in the high school cafeteria, many of the participants drove out to the monument for a memorial service presided over by Dalpiaz. A sprig of evergreen was given to each person to place at the base of the monument. Etched into the granite, along with the names of all who died in the fire, are the words, “In memory of our fellow brothers, sister and co-workers who lost their lives in the Wilberg coal mine disaster—December 19, 1984.”

C.W. Mining attorneys state their intention in the Kingstons’ lawsuit to prove allegations of defamation by the UMWA and the *Militant* newspaper through discovery. This legal process, which can be used if the judge is not convinced to dismiss the case in the early stages, opens up the defendants to massive legal expenses as the Kingstons’ lawyers organize a fishing expedition. Through discovery lawyers can legally demand all kinds of correspondence, records, and depositions from the defendants. This process is often used, not primarily to back up allegations but to exhaust opponents and bleed them dry financially.

“This is a frivolous lawsuit,” said Butero. “The union’s attorneys will represent the miners and we will try to get this dismissed.”

## Two-pronged battle

Following the union vote, Co-Op miners held several meetings at the union hall in Price to decide how to continue their fight. Only a couple of union supporters remain working at the mine, which miners said can’t last long. The miners met with their lawyer about the Kingston lawsuit, started organizing to help everyone find work, and discussed the next steps in a fund-raising effort to help miners get through the holidays and survive in the coming weeks.

“This is a two-pronged battle now,” said Butero. “We don’t have a blueprint for how to organize this fight, but we know the fight to win our case before the NLRB about the illegal actions of C.W. Mining, and the fight to win some kind of immigration status for every one of these miners, go hand in hand.

“We have approached members of Congress in Utah and other parts of the country to help resolve this matter. We are also welcoming suggestions on how to do this. The blatant violations by the Kingstons against the rights of these workers—some of whom have been on the mine payroll for years and then getting fired just a week before a union vote—that injustice alone should qualify each and every one of these workers for some kind of status where they can work without fear of these kinds of reprisals.”

The Co-Op miners said they are asking their supporters to help with generous financial contributions, and the need is immediate. Especially during the holiday season, miners expect added expenses and fewer job prospects. Several unions and individuals have already contributed to the miners’ fund. Supporters of the miners’ fight in Salt Lake City are donating turkeys and children’s gifts to the families of the recently fired workers.

Contributions made out to “Co-Op Miners” can be sent to UMWA District 22 at 525 East, 100 South, Price, UT 84501.

Miners are also urging their supporters to write, call, or fax the NLRB to protest the actions of the Co-Op owners and demand the miners be given their jobs back and the election be decided based on the NLRB’s rulings for who was eligible to vote.

Letters to the NLRB should be sent to Region 27, Director B. Allan Benson at 600 17th Street, 7th floor—North Tower, Denver, CO 80202-5433; Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249. Copies of any messages should be sent to the UMWA at the above address or faxed to (435) 637-9456.

# Swift slashes workforce at Greeley, Colorado, plant

BY MARY MARTIN

GREELEY, Colorado—About 800 workers at Swift and Co. here were laid off December 17.

Prior to the layoff, the workforce of 2,300 processed more than 5,000 head of cattle a day at one of the largest meatpacking plants in the United States.

Swift, the nation's third-largest beef and pork producer, had reported a \$148.5 million, or 6 percent, increase in net sales for a total of \$2.63 billion in the quarter that ended August 29. In October, Swift announced changes in production and notified the workforce there would be massive layoffs.

The estimated economic effects of the layoffs in the Greeley area will exceed \$35 million, including direct wages lost and the loss of economic activity stemming from those wages, according to press reports.

Manuel Sánchez, who has worked for six years in Swift's fabrication department and was not laid off, told the *Militant* that the laid-off workers need financial aid and help with finding new jobs. He said those workers left in the plant confront more difficult work conditions as workers are reassigned to new and unfamiliar jobs and are expected to work up to speed immediately or face threats of being terminated. Others are experiencing speedup on the job, as more operations are combined to make up for a smaller workforce.

On November 20 workers approved a new five-year contract with the company that included a provision giving the union,

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7, a measure of control over the line speed. The union said the company routinely increases the line speed to unsafe levels whenever a breakdown slows production. According to the new contract, a union representative will have to open the lock to enable the company to increase line speed. Asked about the impact of this new contract provision on the company's speedup aims, Sánchez said, "We will have to see how it works out."

A majority of the workers at Swift are foreign born. Many are originally from Mexico as well as other countries. Some laid-off workers told the *Militant* that they are planning to return to Mexico given the scarcity of jobs in the Greeley area. Others said they will head to cities in the Midwest, where the meatpacking industry is concentrated.

"Swift has a funny way of saying 'Happy Holidays' to its workers," said Dave Minshall, UFCW Local 7 spokesman, questioning the timing of the layoffs.

The company and capitalist politicians said the layoffs were necessary to help Swift withstand competition. "This is an unfortunate incident, but Swift is trying to survive in a very competitive business," said State Sen. David Owen of Greeley. He said the company has been handicapped by restrictions imposed on the export of beef due to the mad-cow scare.

After the layoffs, Swift announced it would contribute a paltry \$25,000 to a United Way Agency emergency assistance fund for laid-off workers.

## SWP candidate for Los Angeles mayor gives New Year's greeting on Chinese-language TV



Militant/Frank Forrestal

Wendy Lyons, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, tapes New Year's greetings December 21 for viewers of ETTV, a large Chinese-language cable television program. Lyons works at Farmer John meatpacking plant near Los Angeles. She extended "a special greeting to my Chinese co-workers at Farmer John and those I've worked with in garment shops." After outlining key demands in the SWP campaign platform—championing, in particular, the struggle of working people to organize unions and to strengthen them where they exist to resist the bosses' attacks—Lyons explained the socialists' opposition to Washington's anti-China campaign.

"We call for an end to threats against China, from U.S. naval maneuvers in the Pacific, to the arming of Taiwan, to Washington's aggressive trade policies. We are for Washington dropping all tariffs and restrictions on goods coming in from China and the whole semicolonial world," she said.

"The Socialist Workers Party supports our brothers and sisters in China," she continued, "who are protesting coal mine disasters and many of the same conditions we are fighting against here such as low wages, speedup, no pay for overtime, and the extension of the workweek and workyear."

—FRANK FORRESTAL

# Foreign investors nervous about Russia

Continued from front page

trol of oil assets at a 1993 state auction, enriched himself, becoming the wealthiest man in Russia. But he didn't take into account that lots of money is not enough when going up against competitors who control the government, who used taxation and other means to land him in jail. After revealing that negotiations were in the works to sell part of Yukos to a major western oil company, Khodorkovsky was arrested and jailed in October 2003 on charges of tax evasion and embezzlement. He faces up to 10 years in prison.

Putin and Khodorkovsky and their lieutenants come out of the Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus that ruled over the former Soviet Union for decades. This bureaucracy functioned as a parasitic caste sitting on top of the workers state that came into existence through the October 1917 socialist revolution in Russia that brought workers and farmers to state power. While betraying the revolution and carrying out a political counterrevolution, this parasitic layer did not reestablish capitalism.

Efforts to sell-off Russia's state-owned industries and create a capitalist class out of this bureaucracy have been under way since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. But as current events show this is an unstable and drawn-out process.

"The Russian government's prosecutorial assault on Yukos and its founder," stated a December 20 *New York Times* article, "has set foreign investors on edge and raised questions about the rule of law, property rights," and Putin's "commitment to economic change." Since this dispute began, added the *Times*, "Yukos has lost \$38 billion off its peak market capitalization, leaving it at about \$2 billion today."

From the time the auction of the Yukos unit was announced, Gazprom, the largest company in Russia, made clear its intention to bid for it.

Gazprom produces 94 percent of Russia's natural gas and controls 25 percent of the world's reserves. It operates Russia's domestic gas pipeline network and delivers gas to former Soviet republics and another 25 European countries. The Russian government controls about 38 percent of the company, according to an Associated Press report.

In a desperate effort to halt the Russian government's planned auction, officers of Yukos filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection December 15 in a federal court in the United States. The petition was

filed in Houston, where the company's chief financial officer, Bruce Misamore, has a residence and the company paid a retainer to a U.S. law firm to represent it in the proceedings.

That same day in a protest over the Kremlin's plans, three directors at Yukos—Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, a former vice president at Crédit Lyonnais; Raj Gupta, a former vice president at Phillips Petroleum; and Sarah Carey, a lawyer at Squire, Sanders & Dempsey in Washington—resigned from the company's board.

On December 16 a federal bankruptcy judge in Houston, Letitia Clark, issued a temporary restraining order intended to block participation in the auction of Gazprom and a consortium of banks planning to finance its bid. The banks—including ABN Amro, BNP Paribas, Calyon, Deutsche Bank, J.P. Morgan, and Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein—then froze \$10-\$13 billion they had planned to lend Gazprom.

In her decision, Clark wrote, "Participants in international commerce, in Russia, in the United States and elsewhere, need to have an expectation that when they invest in foreign enterprises they may do so without fear that their investments may be the subject of confiscatory action by agencies of the foreign government."

At the December 19 auction a previously unknown company, Baikal Finance Group, placed the only bid—\$9.3 billion—winning control of the Yukos unit. One of the corre-

spondents for the ITAR-Tass news agency visited the address listed for this company in Tver, 125 miles northwest of Moscow, finding only a mobile phone and a 24-hour grocery store. To be eligible to participate in the auction, the company paid a non-refundable deposit of \$1.7 billion, which "it apparently transferred from an account of Sberbank, the state savings bank," reported the *Financial Times*. Baikal had 14 days to pay the rest of the bidden price. If it failed to do so the Yukos unit would be transferred to the Russian state.

According to reports by Russian news agencies ITAR-Tass and Interfax on December 22, the state-owned oil company Rosneft subsequently bought Baikal, thus gaining control of the Yukos oil assets.

"Russia is sliding toward being uninvestable. The whole thing is very sad," bemoaned Martin Taylor, hedge fund manager at London-based Thames River capital, reported *Reuters*.

A 1998 report by the pro-imperialist U.S. Freedom House states that some 95 percent of the 24,000 state and collective farms in Russia "have been reorganized, but are largely unreformed," meaning the land is still not privatized. "Over 70 percent of state-controlled industry has been turned over to private ownership since market reforms began in 1992," the report states. "Nevertheless, the 'crown jewels' of industry remain state monopolies, and they still dominate almost every major industrial sector."

## Militant Fighting Fund tops \$48,000!

BY SAM MANUEL

The Militant Fighting Fund has been a resounding success. As this issue went to press contributions amounted to \$48,351—161 percent of the goal of \$30,000. Pledges actually topped \$51,000. With the slower pace of mail delivery around the holidays, the last donations may not arrive until the end of the year. Those who didn't have a chance to pay off their pledge are encouraged to do so now.

Partisans of the *Militant* around the world went out of their way to accomplish this. In Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for example, supporters of the *Militant* sent in \$1,260 to pay off all local pledges. They then sent in an extra \$124. "This is the money raised from a sale of smoke-damaged books at a socialist educational conference in Pittsburgh," said Samantha

Kelly in a note that accompanied the check. The books were damaged when the Socialist Workers 2004 campaign hall and Pathfinder book center in Hazleton was firebombed Sept. 11, 2004.

An increasing flow of donations also arrived from outside the United States. Supporters of the socialist newsweekly in Sydney, Australia, raised \$973, and \$550 came in from Montreal.

The fund was launched October 31 to help the *Militant's* defense against a harassment lawsuit filed against it by the Kingstons, the owners of the Co-Op mine in Utah. (For an explanation of the lawsuit, and how the Co-Op bosses recently amended their complaint, see the article on the front page.)

Any last donations should be sent to the *Militant* at the address listed on page 2.

# 'Islamism'

Continued from Page 10

declined, increasingly incapable of offering leadership in anti-imperialist struggles. In Algeria the Islamic Salvation Front won the 1992 national elections but the results were annulled by the regime and a bloody civil war ensued, leading to more than 100,000 deaths. Today, however, the FIS appears to have lost steam; incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika won a sweeping reelection last April. In Afghanistan the Taliban, which seized power in 1996, became politically isolated by its reactionary policies; Washington paid little price for its invasion of that country and overthrow of the Taliban-led regime.

Regarding Mirelowitz's question about Hamas, the rise of that organization in the Palestinian national movement is a slightly later development that takes place within the overall decline of Islamism. Through much of the 1980s, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was still largely on a revolutionary nationalist course. But as the PLO became bourgeoisified and increasingly turned its eyes toward accommodation with Washington, groups like Hamas got some wind in their sails.

Although Hamas gained a mass following, especially in the Gaza Strip, it has never been able to win the leadership of Palestinian movement, which is still dominated by the PLO. Over time, Hamas has shown that it lacks a political perspective that can mobilize the masses of Palestinians and their supporters who are resisting Israel because it stole their land. The group's political course and methods of struggle, largely suicide bombings, have isolated its leadership, making it vulnerable to attack—politically and militarily—by the Israeli and U.S. governments. Tel Aviv has been systematically decimating the leaders of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other such groups, assassinating them with virtual impunity.

The flameout of al-Qaeda, which U.S. imperialism and its allies in the region have been progressively wiping out since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, is further evidence of the overall trend described here.

Washington and the other imperialist powers, however, cannot solve the economic and social crisis bred by their own system. Instead, the workings of that system generate permanent instability. That creates space that workers and farmers in the Mideast will use over the coming years to engage in struggles and, as they go through those experiences, forge the revolutionary leadership they deserve.



# Ukraine: How Bolsheviks championed right to self-determination

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The revolutionary government that came to power in Russia in October 1917 freed oppressed peoples who had been under the tsarist boot of Russian domination from Ukraine to Mongolia, and guaranteed their right to national self-determination—the first government in the world to do so. The Bolshevik leadership of the revolution began to forge a voluntary federation of republics based on soviet power. This federation took affirmative action to develop the economies and culture of the oppressed nations in order to close the historical gap between them and the formerly oppressor Russian nation.

The course of the Bolshevik Party, which led the revolution, was reversed in the 1920s by the bureaucratic caste that took political power and led a political counterrevolution—although the caste was unable to destroy the economic foundations of the workers state. The second life the Stalinist regime breathed into Great Russian chauvinism and the oppression of non-Russian nations looms behind the current political crisis that has shaken Ukraine since mid-November, as hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets to support competing presidential candidates following the November 21 election.

The Russian government, which backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich in the election, is trying to slow down the establishment of regimes in former Soviet republics on Russia's borders that are more subservient to Washington and other imperialist powers. Ukraine, which has a large Russian-speaking population, has maintained substantial economic and military ties with Russia since declaring independence in 1991.

During the crisis, forces in the eastern section of Ukraine loyal to Moscow have threatened to split away from the newly constituted country if opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko wins the presidency. This reactionary political course would be a blow to the self-determination of the people of Ukraine, who have fought for decades to free themselves from the yoke of national oppression under a succession of Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union.

At the same time, Yushchenko's perspective of greater integration into NATO and subservience to imperialism is equally reactionary to that of the pro-Moscow government in Kiev.

This article takes up the roots of Ukrainian nationalism and its evolution under the impact of the October 1917 Russian

Revolution and its degeneration.

## From tsar to Russian Revolution

Ukraine became the possession of the Romanov dynasty in 1654 under the Treaty of Pereyaslav. By the early 20th century Ukraine made up 20 percent of the population of the Great Russian empire. Its land was the most fertile and its industry among the most modern—Ukrainian coal and iron were indispensable to the industry of Russia as a whole.

The feudal monarchy that ruled in Moscow carried out a policy of Russification of Ukraine. In the decades following the Treaty of Pereyaslav the tsars banned the Ukrainian language and suppressed the Ukrainian church. The regime adopted a policy of colonization, under which a privileged Russian minority was fostered in Ukraine.

The October 1917 revolution in Russia brought to power a revolutionary government based on councils of workers', peasants', and soldiers' delegates called soviets (the Russian word for council). It mobilized peasants to expropriate the estates of the big landlords and distribute the nationalized land to be worked by the tillers.

The Bolshevik leadership organized workers to expropriate capitalist property in industry and banking, and established a state monopoly of foreign trade. It fought to draw workers into taking increasing control of industry and on that basis advance toward workers' management, making it possible to begin economic planning to meet social needs.

The Bolsheviks also launched an international communist movement to aid fellow workers and farmers around the world in a common struggle of social and national liberation.

The socialist revolution also sounded the bell of "nation time." It gave an impulse to revolutionary uprisings elsewhere throughout the tsarist empire, which Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin described as a "prison house of nations"—from Central Asia to the Transcaucasus to the Baltic states.

The Bolsheviks defended the right to self-determination of the nations oppressed by the Romanovs, up to and including the right to form an independent state. Finland, for example, gained its independence at this time.

The Ukrainian struggle for national rights exploded in 1917–19. One of the groups that played a central role in this struggle was the Ukrainian Borotba (Struggle) Party. Convinced that the Bolshevik revolution offered the way forward for the workers and peasants of Ukraine, the Borotba Party merged with the Ukrainian Communist Party (CP) in 1920.

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky later wrote that "the most important indication of the success of the Leninist policy in the Ukraine was the fusion of the Ukrainian Bolshevik Party with the organization of the Borotbists."

## Russification vs. Ukrainization

As opposed to the Russification of the tsars, the Bolsheviks adopted a policy known as Ukrainization.

The Central Committee of the Russian CP resolved in November 1919 that its members in Ukraine "must put into practice the right of the working people to study in the Ukrainian language and to speak their native language in all Soviet institutions; they must in every way counteract attempts at Russification that push the Ukrainian language into the background and must convert that language into an instrument for the communist education of the working people. Steps must be taken immediately to ensure that in all Soviet institutions there are sufficient Ukrainian-speaking employees and that in future all employees are able to speak Ukrainian."

The bureaucratic caste that usurped political power in Russia in the 1920s re-



Working people in Odessa, Ukraine, greet Red Army in 1919 liberating the city from counterrevolutionary White Army. Revolutionary government that came to power in Russia in October 1917 guaranteed right to self-determination of oppressed nations.

versed the Bolshevik course all along the line. One of the questions in which this first became apparent was in the policy to be adopted by the government in Moscow toward those nations that had been oppressed by the tsar and were just beginning to enjoy a measure of self-determination. The opening of the struggle against the course of the rising caste is documented in *Lenin's Final Fight*, published by Pathfinder Press.

In September 1922, just a few months before the stroke that finally debilitated him, Lenin launched a political fight around the question of the Georgian republic and of the voluntary union of Soviet republics.

In a letter to the party's Political Bureau and addressed to Bolshevik leader Lev Kamenev, Lenin criticized the proposal by Joseph Stalin, the CP's general secretary, to incorporate five independent Soviet republics—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Georgia, and Ukraine—into the Russian Federation as "autonomous republics."

Lenin proposed a completely different approach: that Russia join with the other republics "on an equal basis into a new union, a new federation, the Union of the Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

Although Lenin and Trotsky, his principle ally in this fight, won approval for their resolutions at the time, Stalin's reactionary policies prevailed following Lenin's death in 1924.

## Stalinist counterrevolution

Stalin's course was intensified and institutionalized with the consolidation of the caste's counterrevolution in the early 1930s. The "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" reemerged as a prison house of nations—it was no longer a voluntary federation, but a "Soviet" super-state.

By the late 1920s the former Borotbists had been driven out of the Communist Party leadership in Ukraine, and most of them were killed by the Stalin murder machine in the 1930s.

In 1929 the Stalinist bureaucracy began a half-decade of forced collectivization of agriculture. In the name of financing rapid growth of industry, Moscow devastated agriculture in the Soviet Union and shattered the worker-peasant alliance that had made the revolution and was its cornerstone.

The brutality of forced collectivization in Ukraine was doubly severe because Moscow was also determined to crush any nationalist aspirations among the Ukrainian people. The bureaucracy's policy in the countryside produced a famine that killed several million Ukrainians in 1932–33.

"Nowhere did the purges and repressions assume such a savage character as they did in the Ukraine," Trotsky wrote in the 1939 article "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads," which can be found in Pathfinder's *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1939–1940]*.

The reactionary caste in power promoted Russification with a vengeance. Advances made in introducing the Ukrainian language into the schools and public administration were driven back by Stalin and his successors. Classes were given in Russian in the universities in Ukraine,

and Russian culture and books became predominant.

Aping the policies of the tsars, the Stalinist regime carried out a course of forced dispersal of oppressed peoples and the colonization of republics with Russian settlers who would become a privileged minority, loyal to Moscow and against the majority of the local population.

Although a certain loosening of restrictions followed in the years after Stalin's death in 1953, Russification remained in full force under Nikita Khrushchev and those who followed him.

The faintest nationalist expressions continued to be met with repression from Moscow. This occurred regardless of whether it came from the circles of industrial workers that were organized in the late 1950s or Stalinist officials in Ukraine who hoped to ride on nationalist sentiment to build a basis of support against their rivals, such as Ukrainian CP boss Petro Yukhimovych Shelest, who was unceremoniously driven from office in 1973 as a "bourgeois nationalist." A signal of his impending downfall was when an opponent in the ruling caste condemned a book by Shelest for saying "nothing about the advantages gained [for Ukraine] on entering the unified, centralized Russian state" at the time of the Treaty of Pereyaslav—the agreement among thieves that brought Ukraine under the tsarist yoke three centuries before!

In his 1939 article, Trotsky defended the Leninist policy of establishing the USSR only as a voluntary federation of workers and farmers republics, guaranteeing the rights of national self-determination. He outlined the importance of the working class championing the call for "A united, free, and independent workers' and peasants' Soviet Ukraine."

Only through the struggle for self-determination can the road be opened to a voluntary union of soviet republics, Trotsky explained. "To speed and facilitate this process, to make possible the genuine brotherhood of the peoples in the future," he wrote, the workers of Russia must "without any reservation declare to the Ukrainian people that they are ready to support with all their might the slogan of an independent Ukraine in a joint struggle against the autocratic bureaucracy and against imperialism."

Once Stalinism had transformed the Soviet Union into a new prison house of nations, its break-up, its disintegration from within, was inevitable. This became a precondition to a new advance of the worldwide struggle for national liberation and socialism.

Today the workers and farmers in Ukraine need time to build a working-class leadership in the struggle against the devastating economic conditions that are the product of years of Stalinist misrule followed by a decade of efforts by a succession of petty-bourgeois regimes at reestablishing capitalism. Through these battles working people there will learn over time to reject the various choices for misleadership they are presented with today—of the Yushchenko or Yanukovich variety—and forge links with militant workers and proletarian revolutionists worldwide.

## For further reading

### U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes

"Once Stalinism had transformed the Soviet Union into the opposite of a voluntary federation of workers and peasants republics, its break-up, its disintegration from within, was inevitable. This became a precondition to a new advance of the worldwide struggle for national liberation and socialism."

In 'New International' no. 11 \$14

### Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]

Includes the article "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads." One of 14 volumes covering the period of Trotsky's exile from the Soviet Union in 1929 until his assassination at Stalin's orders in 1940. \$30.95 (for this volume)





# Brazil: unionists march for minimum wage hike

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The largest union federation in Brazil, the CUT, led a December 13–15 “National Minimum Wage March” of 3,000 to the country’s capital, Brasilia, to demand a 23 percent hike in the minimum wage, from about \$93 to \$115 per month. In response, the Workers Party government headed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva announced an increase to \$110 to begin in May 2005.

The labor action, which kicked off 25 miles outside Brasilia in Valparaíso, also demanded a government commitment to an annual raise in the minimum wage and a lowering of taxes on working people. Minister of Labor Ricardo Berzoini said the administration would seek congressional approval for a 10 percent increase in the cutoff level that determines tax rates.

The minimum wage is a vital question for working people in Brazil. About 16 million retirees receive government pensions calculated on the basis of the minimum wage, and the CUT estimates that nearly 42 million workers depend on this sum for their livelihood. The value of this wage has declined sharply since it was instituted in 1940, the CUT reports. Today it stands at one-third its original value, and its purchasing power is less than one-half of what it was in 1980.

Da Silva’s landslide victory in October 2002 reflected widespread discontent among workers, peasants, and layers of the middle-class in Brazil who were devastated by effects of the worldwide economic depression and the attacks on social programs carried out by the previous government, headed by Fernando Enrique Cardoso. A downward spiral of the economy that began in 1998 was marked by ballooning interest rates, a jump in unemployment, and a decline in the value of the currency. The real, the Brazilian currency, lost 35 percent of its value, eating away at the buying power of workers earning the minimum wage or living on a pension.

In addition to a “Zero Hunger” program to raise welfare allotments to \$25 per month for 50 million people, the Workers Party has promised to double the minimum wage by the end of its four years as governing party. Halfway through its term in office, the social-democratic administration has so far raised the minimum wage by about 25 percent.

The Brazilian government has tried to balance the expectation of workers and peasants that it will respond to their need

for jobs, land, and improved conditions of life and labor, and its commitment to cut spending on social programs in order to meet the demands of imperialist powers made through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to keep a steady flow of payments on its \$206 billion foreign debt. “It’s legitimate that workers make demands during a moment of growth and increasing employment, but it’s my job to make sure the accounts balance,” Brazilian finance minister Antonio Palocci told the Associated Press December 7.

Brasilia has been able to allocate some funding for the Zero Hunger program and the minimum wage because of an upturn this year in the Brazilian economy. Fueled by a rapid rise in agricultural exports, the economy is expected to grow by 5 percent in 2004, after stagnant growth the year before.

“Agriculture is now a \$150 billion a year business in Brazil,” the *New York Times* reported December 12, “accounting for more than 40 percent of the country’s exports.” Brazilian capitalists are now the world’s largest exporters of chicken, beef, orange juice, sugar, coffee, and tobacco. Soybeans are the country’s top export crop, accounting for nearly half the total shipped out. Brazil’s trade surplus is likely to hit a record \$30 billion in 2004.

## PLO leader calls for an end to the intifada

Continued from front page

tunity for building a new and different relationship with the Palestinians was created following the death of Yasser Arafat, who constituted the primary obstacle to peace,” Sharon told an audience December 16 at the Herzliya Conference, where he first outlined Tel Aviv’s “unilateral disengagement” plan last year. “Now there is a real chance that new Palestinian leaders will rise, those who will be elected, who will truly abandon the path of terror, and instead will advance a strategy of reconciliation and negotiation without violence.”

Abbas is the favored candidate of both Washington and Tel Aviv for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority. Washington signaled its desire to prop up Abbas by announcing that direct financial aid to the Palestinian territories would be doubled “if the Palestinian elections set for Jan. 9 occurred successfully and if the new government cracked down on militant groups,” reported



Reuters/Jamil Bittar

Some 3,000 unionists march from Valparaíso, Brazil, to the country’s capital, Brasilia, in mid-December to demand 23 percent increase in minimum wage.

Businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole had their best year since 1980, a United Nations agency reported December 15. On average the economy of countries in the region expanded 5.5 percent. Although export-driven profits may have soared, workers and peasants received little benefit. Unemployment fell in a number of Latin American countries, for example, but official figures remained above 10 percent in many, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

At the same time, governments throughout the continent remain bound to imperialist creditors, even if there was a slight loosening of the burden in 2004. The percentage of government debt to gross national product declined from 43 percent to 37 percent. For Brasilia it is projected to fall from 58 percent to 53 percent. By comparison, the European Union’s Growth and Stability Pact sets a standard for member countries to keep the percentage of debt below 3 percent of GDP.

the December 17 *New York Times*.

“Disengagement from Gaza is uniting the people,” he said in the December 16 speech. He was referring to Tel Aviv’s plan to withdraw its 7,500 settlers who currently occupy 20 percent of the Gaza Strip, a narrow stretch of occupied Palestinian land that is home to 1.3 million Palestinians. “It is uniting us in distinguishing between goals which deserve to be fought for...such as Jerusalem, the large settlement blocs, the security zones and maintaining Israel’s character as a Jewish state—rather than goals where it is clear to all of us that they will not be realized.”

Under Sharon’s “disengagement plan,” which is supported by a majority of the Israeli ruling class, Tel Aviv plans to make a series of secondary concessions to the Palestinians, beginning with the removal of the 7,500 Israeli settlers and ending direct rule in Gaza, dismantling isolated, far-flung settlements on the West Bank,

and ending Tel Aviv’s military control over Gaza’s southern border. The broad aim of the Israeli rulers is to shore up the long-term viability of Israel as a junior imperialist power in the Middle East.

“The understandings between the U.S. president and me protect Israel’s most essential interests,” Sharon continued. “Not demanding a return to the ’67 borders; allowing Israel to permanently keep large settlement blocs [with] high Israeli populations; and the total refusal of allowing Palestinian refugees to return to Israel.”

The 1967 borders of the occupied territories encircle 22 percent of the land that once was Palestine. Sharon has made it clear that any future Palestinian “state” that comes out of negotiations will not grant the Palestinians control over the entire 22 percent. Israel has built more than 100 miles of a wall that, when complete, will openly annex 15 percent of the West Bank to Israel.

The refugees Sharon referred to are about 700,000 Palestinians who were driven from their land when the state of Israel was established in 1948. They have lived for the past five decades, along with their descendants, in refugee camps in the occupied territories and surrounding countries. A key demand of the Palestinian national struggle has been their right, and the right of their estimated 4 million descendants, to return to their homes.

Sharon’s plan has drawn the ire of the right wing of his governing party and coalition. Many figures in Sharon’s Likud party and other right-wing members of the ruling coalition have quit or been fired over their opposition to the plan, leaving him temporarily leading a minority bloc in Israel’s parliament. Sharon is now moving to establish a new coalition with the Labor party, whose leading spokespeople broadly support the disengagement plan.

This is another step in the “peace” process between Tel Aviv and the PLO that started with the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Oslo accord. It is a product both of the inability of the Israeli regime to crush Palestinian resistance, as well as the bourgeoisification of the PLO leadership. The top leaders of the PLO have more and more turned their eyes away from the ranks of the fighting Palestinian people and relied first on the Arab regimes in the region and then on accommodation with Washington in the struggle for a Palestinian homeland.

Over the past four years, in the absence of revolutionary leadership in the national liberation struggle, groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad—bourgeois organizations that advocate “driving the Jews into the

Continued on Page 11

## Bolivia: local elections register dissatisfaction of toilers

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), led by farm leader Evo Morales, emerged as the nationwide party in Bolivia with the largest vote in December 5 municipal elections. Bolivians cast ballots for mayors and councilors in 327 cities and towns across the country.

Although the Electoral Court has not yet issued official results, saying it has until December 31 to do so, the Equipos Mori opinion poll company, based on 80 percent of votes cast, reports that “traditional parties failed to win a single large city,” according to an Associated Press release.

These parties—the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), Movement of the National Revolution (MNR), New Republican Force (NFR), and National Democratic Action (ADN)—received a combined vote of just over 10 percent of the national vote. Prominent figures from these parties won the mayoralty in the capital, La Paz, and other major cities by abandoning their parties and forming local electoral vehicles. The MAS, on the other hand, scored victories in half of the country’s municipalities and will now control a number of medium-sized towns, gaining at least 25 percent of the vote.

These results follow a pattern of electoral successes by similar political forces elsewhere in Latin America—such as social democrats Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva in Brazil, Ricardo Lagos in Chile, and Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, and Peronist Néstor Kirchner in Argentina. These politicians

were voted into office after promising to improve the living standards of working people, which have been devastated by imperialist domination and the capitalist economic depression that has engulfed much of South America in the last half-decade.

Over the past decade, successive Bolivian regimes have complied with imperialist demands to accelerate “free market” reforms. They have cut social welfare programs, opened the door to greater private and foreign investment in state-owned companies, and removed price subsidies on essential goods.

Morales, as the central leader of MAS, has gained popularity by campaigning against imperialist austerity demands advanced often in the name of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and in solidarity with the governments of Cuba and Venezuela. He calls for an end to the government’s coca eradication efforts, which have driven tens of thousands of farmers deeper into poverty. He also has stated his opposition to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency’s operations in Bolivia, which have served as a means for deeper U.S. military intervention throughout the Andean region. MAS refused all state subsidies for the election campaign, arguing that the money should be spent on public education.

With privatization of Bolivia’s mines in 1985, mass firings forced many former miners to join indigenous Aymara and Quechua peoples in growing coca for a living. In 1995, a congress of *cocaleros* voted to

create a political organization—Sovereignty of the Peoples. The group ran in the elections as MAS.

In the election for president in 2002, Morales received 21 percent of the popular vote against 22 percent for MNR candidate Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who was declared the president in a deal worked out by Congress. A little over a year later, massive mobilizations of workers and peasants against government plans to begin exporting natural gas to the United States forced Sánchez de Lozada to resign and flee the country. The plan was widely seen among working people as another Wall Street project to further exploit Bolivia’s natural wealth.

Bolivia is rich in minerals and other natural resources. It is a leading producer of tin and has the second-largest known reserves of natural gas in South America, after Venezuela.

Imperialist investors and domestic capitalists have profited from the plunder of the country’s resources and superexploitation of its labor. At the same time, more than 60 percent of the population gets by on less than \$2 a day. About 70 percent of the population lives below the government’s officially declared poverty line. Bolivia’s workers and farmers are also being squeezed by never-ending payments on the country’s \$5.3 billion foreign debt—two-thirds of the country’s gross domestic product—that transfers wealth into the coffers of banks in the imperialist centers.



# Building a revolutionary party in capitalist ‘prosperity’

Below is an excerpt from *Speeches to the Party*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. This collection of speeches and letters by James P. Cannon documents an important political struggle within the Socialist Workers Party, precipitated by the rise of an opposition discouraged with the prospect of building a revolutionary party in the United States. An organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World prior to and during World War I, Cannon was a founding leader of the Communist Party (CP) USA following the October 1917 Russian Revolution. He was expelled from the CP in 1928 for supporting Leon Trotsky's fight

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

to continue V.I. Lenin's course for building a communist movement. A founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party, Cannon served as its national secretary and then national chairman emeritus until his death in 1974. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



BY JAMES P. CANNON

For several months we have been dis-



Minnesota Historical Society

**Striking Teamsters defend themselves from assaults by police and special deputies in the Minneapolis market district, May 1934. Labor revolt will grow out of the bitter and irreconcilable grievances of the unskilled and semiskilled mass of production workers, Cannon explained, not the concerns of the labor aristocracy.**

cussing the contrasting proposals of the two sides in our internal party conflict. It is time now, I think, to go a step further; to advance the discussion to an examination of the basic causes of the fight. You will recall that Trotsky did this in the 1939–40 fight with Burnham and Shachtman. At a certain stage of that struggle, after the positions of both sides were made clear—not only what they had to say but what they didn't say, how they acted, the atmosphere of the fight, and everything else—when it was fairly clear what was really involved Trotsky wrote his article “A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party.”

That article summed up his judgment of the Burnham-Shachtman faction as it had revealed itself in the fire of the struggle—when it had become clear that we were not dealing, as sometimes happens, with a mere difference of opinion among cothinkers on a given point or two that might be settled by fraternal discussion and debate. Burnham and his supporters—and his dupes—were moved by a profound inner compulsion to break with the doctrine and tradition of the party. They carried their revolt against the party to the point of frenzy, as petty-bourgeois factionalists always do. They became impervious to any argument. Trotsky undertook to explain the social basis of their faction and their factional frenzy. We must

do the same now once again.

The social groupings in the present opposition are not quite the same as in 1940. In that fight it was a case of a few demoralized intellectuals based on a genuine petty-bourgeois social composition of a section of the party, especially in New York, but also in Chicago and some other parts of the country—a petty-bourgeois concentration revolting against the proletarian line of the party.

The social composition of the party today is far better and provides a much narrower base of support for an opportunist faction. As a result of the split with the Burnhamites and our deliberate concentration on trade union work, the party today is far more proletarian in its composition, especially outside New York. Despite all that, the real social composition of the party is by no means uniform; it reflects some of the changes which have taken place in the American working class. This has been strikingly demonstrated by the line-up of the party trade unionists in our factional struggle. The revolutionists among them—the big majority—on the one side, and the conservatized elements—a small minority—on the other, have chosen different sides instinctively and almost automatically.

Since the consolidation of the CIO unions and the 13-year period of war and postwar

boom, a new stratification has taken place within the American working class, and particularly and conspicuously in the CIO unions. Our party, which is rooted in the unions, reflects that stratification too. The worker who has soaked up the general atmosphere of the long prosperity and begun to live and think like a petty bourgeois is a familiar figure in the country at large. He has even made his appearance in the Socialist Workers Party as a ready-made recruit for an opportunist faction.

In our 1952 convention resolution, we explained the situation in the American working class as a whole in the two sections “The Causes of Labor Conservatism and the Premises for a New Radicalization” and “Perspectives of a New Radicalization.” In my report at the national convention, I called those two sections “the *heart* of the resolution” and centered my report around them.

It appears to me now, in the light of the conflict in the party and its real causes, which are now manifest, that those sections of the convention resolution dealing with the class as a whole require further elaboration and amplification. We need a more precise examination of the stratifications within the working class, which are barely touched there, and of the projection of these stratifications in the composition of the unions, in the various inner-union tendencies, and even in our own party. This, I believe, is the key to the otherwise inexplicable riddle of why one proletarian section of the party, even though it is a small minority, supports a capitulatory opportunist faction against the proletarian-revolutionary line and leadership of the party.

This apparent contradiction—this division of working class forces in party factional struggle—is not new. In the classical faction struggles of our international movement since the time of Marx and Engels, there has always been a division, in the party itself, between the different strata of workers. The proletarian left wing by no means ever had all the workers, and the opportunist petty-bourgeois wing was never without some working class support, that is, working class in the technical sense of wage workers. The revisionist intellectuals and the trade union opportunists always nestled together in the right wing of the party. In the SWP at the present time, we have a repetition of the classical line-up that characterized the struggle of left and right in the Second International before the First World War.

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**The ‘justice’ system**—Last July, Frank Lobato was shot dead by Tanjan Ford, a Denver cop, one of several responding to a



Harry Ring

domestic abuse call. Lobato, 63 and bed-ridden, was watching TV and sipping a can of pop. Ford says he shot Lobato because he thought the can was a weapon.

A grand jury decided not to indict Ford and district attorney William Ritter refused to prosecute.

Angry members of the Black and Latino community where the killing occurred, marched in protest at police headquarters. The Lobato family declared their father was murdered in bed. Ritter has an unbroken record. During his 10 years in office cops have fatally shot 38 people. Ritter has never filed a single charge.

**Capitalism, rotten as bad meat**—Five days before Xmas, 800 meat packers—almost the entire second shift—was due to be fired at the Swift plant in Greeley, Colorado. The United Food and Commercial Workers union has a contract at the plant. The United Way charity says the mass layoff comes at a hard time in the holiday season. It says its rent

assistance program has a two-year waiting list.

**The can-do society**—London’s 100-year-old water mains are said to be the worst in England. Claiming they can’t afford replacements, authorities want to lower the water pressure, hoping it will give the system a few more years. Critics charge that a million residents will be dealing with showers that dribble and toilets that don’t flush.

**Blah, blah**—Recalls of defective vehicles have reached a record high. GM leads with recalls of 10.5 million vehicles this year. This is said to be due to stiffer federal safety regulations (a joke?), more complex computer and electronics components, the

cost of damage suits, etc. An Associated Press article includes all this. But not a mention of the steady push for ever greater speed-up on the assembly line, which invites defects.

**Still a lean new year**—On New Year’s Day, in the Washington District of Columbia, the \$6 minimum wage will increase 45 cents. The feds estimate that 3,500 workers in the Capital district earn less than the new minimum. (It would be interesting to see those responsible trying to support a family on \$258 a week.)

**Gosh**—The North Carolina National Guard honored the Blue Ridge paper company for paying employees fighting in the Mideast.

The company employs more than a thousand workers, and three of them are serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are being paid the difference between the military wage and the pay at Blue Ridge.

**‘Nothing’s too good...’**—GI Robert Loria lost an arm in Iraq and was shipped back to the U.S. where he found himself stuck in Fort Hood, Texas, and staring at an Army bill of \$1,800 for loss of equipment and travel fare. His wife took the outrage to the media and several members of Congress hastily intervened. The military cancelled the bill.

**Season’s greetings**—Merry Marxmas and a revolutionary New Year. Keep on fighting.

## Thousands visit Pathfinder stand at Mexico book fair

BY BETSEY STONE

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—The Pathfinder Press booth attracted thousands of visitors at the Guadalajara International Book Fair held here November 27-December 5. A total of 511 books and pamphlets were sold at the stand.

Many of those who stopped by were eager to learn about something rarely mentioned in the Mexican press: there is working-class resistance within the United States to the bosses’ offensive on wages and living and working conditions.

Many appreciated the articles in the *Militant* and its sister publication in Spanish *Perspectiva Mundial* (PM) about the 15-month-long struggle of Co-Op miners in Utah to win union representation. Forty-seven copies and seven subscriptions to PM were sold, along with 14 copies of the *Militant*—nearly double the number at last year’s fair.

Another indication of the interest in U.S. politics was the fact that 42 copies of the pamphlet *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism* by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes were sold. This booklet approaches education from the working-class point of view—as a social question, as the fight for the transformation of learning into a universal and lifetime activity. It also explains how schools under capitalism in the United States and beyond are institutions of social control, and how the obedience and deference the rulers seek to inculcate in the classroom are backed up on the streets by the cops’ clubs and automatic weapons and in the prisons by longer sentences and brutality.

Luis Ortíz, a high school teacher who bought this pamphlet two years ago, came back this time to buy five more copies. He also bought three copies of the book *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* and two yearlong subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial* to share and study with his students.

“I can’t stand the game being played in the schools, where kids are there just to be disciplined, to stand at attention and salute,” he said. “Students are affected by the class struggle. That’s why I’m buying these books, to help advance their understanding of this.”

Some workers and young people came to the stand looking for books that could help strengthen their struggles against the unrelenting attacks on Mexican workers’ wages, conditions of work, and social services.

Looking over the books stacked up at the front of the stand, they often reached for *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* by Barnes, which analyzes the international capitalist crisis and the independent action needed by workers and farmers to confront it. Nineteen copies of this book were sold.

Elías Carmen, a worker at a U.S.-owned computer plant of 4,000, told volunteers at the Pathfinder booth that he was looking for books that would shed light on how to organize a union at his plant. He came to the stand twice, purchasing *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, which was available at the fair for the first time in Spanish, *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, and

several books by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Leon Trotsky.

During the fair, a “labor reform” law was under discussion in Mexico’s parliament. The bill places limitations on the right to strike, restricts the right to organize new unions, and allows for probation periods lasting from 30 days to six months—during which workers can be terminated without any severance pay.

If passed, the legislation will also strengthen the ability of employers to lay off workers at will and use temporary agencies to avoid paying benefits.

“They increase the hours any time they want, they change our schedule at will, from days to nights, and they only hire you for a few months,” Moisés Rubio told Pathfinder booth volunteers, referring to a temp agency that provides workers for a British-owned plant. Rubio, who gets work through this agency, said he earns 500 pesos (\$44) per week.

“A real attraction that hooked people in was that they were talking with people who were part of unions and working-class movements in the U.S.,” said Michael Ortega, a Young Socialist from Newark, New Jersey, who helped at the Pathfinder stand. Volunteers staffing the booth also came from Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Seattle.

Upon seeing the large poster of Thomas Sankara, the central leader of the revolution in Burkina Faso in the early 1980s, many asked who he was. Eleven bought the new Spanish-language edition of *We Are Heirs of the World’s Revolutions* and 10 bought *Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*—both by Sankara.

Books on the Cuban Revolution were among the best sellers. *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* topped the list with 65 copies sold. Twelve people bought *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground*, Pathfinder’s newest title on the revolutionary movement that led to the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship in the Caribbean nation in 1959.

Several publishing houses from Cuba occupied a large stand at the fair, which was always crowded. Many titles were on display. They included books on Cuban history, novels, and poetry, as well as posters, CDs, and videos. The last day of the fair, more than 60 people attended a discussion organized by the Cuban publishers of a new biography of Fidel Castro’s youth, *Todo el tiempo de los cedros* by Katiuska Blanco. Blanco, a Cuban author, was in Angola as a correspondent for the Cuban daily *Granma* when Cuban troops participated in defending Angola against invasions of the country by the army of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

### Largest book fair

The Guadalajara Book Fair, which is held every year in Mexico’s second largest city, is the biggest such event in the Spanish-speaking world. This year over 1,500 publishers from 38 countries filled the giant exhibition center. More than 450,000 people attended the fair, including many elementary and high school students.

Three days were set aside during the fair for those involved in the book trade to carry out business. Volunteers at the Pathfinder booth took advantage of this time to inform

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Militant

Pathfinder booth at Guadalajara book fair, November 27–December 5.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



### January 18, 1980

DENVER—Two years after the 110-day coal strike made labor history, the United Mine Workers of America held its forty-eighth constitutional convention here December 10–19.

It was presided over by a new union president, Sam Church, and watched closely by the coal companies, intent on seeing whether the UMWA would at last provide them with a “trouble-free” work force.

Many mine workers and union observers forecast that this year’s meeting would be one of the most important conventions in the UMWA’s history.

For union miners, two problems cloud the future. The first is that UMWA miners account for only half of the coal production in the country. New strip mines in the West are opening largely non-union, and in the East, especially in coal-rich Kentucky, the UMWA’s grip on production is slipping.

The second is a development since the 1977–78 strike: 20,000 UMWA miners are on layoff.

For the coal companies, this year’s gathering was a test of whether Church could exercise “control” over the membership and avoid another convention like the one in 1976 in Cincinnati, “a raucous affair,” as one pro-business newspaper described it last month.

The facts known, the 1976 convention was one of the most democratic union conventions ever held in the United States. It was this democracy that the coal operators and their friends in the news media wagered would be curbed at the Denver convention. Contrary to advance reports of what Church and his predecessor Arnold Miller had planned, no major retreats on union democracy were proposed.



### January 10, 1955

A momentous event is scheduled for the last week in April at Bandung, Indonesia—an Asia-Africa conference to which 30 nations of the two largest continents have been invited. This conference will be attended by government leaders of countries inhabited by more than half the world’s people. Most of them have been freed only recently from direct western imperialist rule or exploitation.

Among the countries invited are new China and North Vietnam, which has just been won from imperialist France through a revolutionary independence struggle. Also invited are Turkey, Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Central African Federation (the Rhodesias, and Nyasaland), Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syria, Thailand, South Vietnam, and Yemen.

Conspicuously absent from the invitation list are Australia and New Zealand, two of the eight countries, including the United States, England, and France, which make up the so-called South East Asia Treaty Organization organized by the western imperialists last September in Manila. South Africa, dominated by white racists, was also not invited.

Whatever the deliberations and decisions of the conference, the mere fact that it is held will be of historic significance. It will be a visible symbol of a revolutionary transformation that has taken place in the world the past 15 years—the crumbling of the vast colonial empires of the advanced capitalist nations and the emergence of new independent nations hostile to imperialism. It will be a graphic demonstration that the western powers do not speak for the Asian and African people and can make no claim to their unquestioning support.



# 46 years of Cuban Revolution

It was New Year’s Eve 46 years ago in Havana. Parties were in full swing in palatial homes, fancy hotels, and casinos. The beneficiaries of the brutal dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista were celebrating, along with the cream—or what you might call the scum—of Cuba’s capitalist class, and their dear friends flown in from the United States. They were wearing their tuxedos, their evening gowns, their imported orchids, their jewels. They were swilling champagne and pouring it over each other’s heads. It was a typical New Year’s Eve for that tiny layer in Cuba.

At the same time, armed fighters from the July 26 Movement were taking over the streets of the city.

The triumph of the revolution that night surprised Cuba’s wealthy, and their North American patrons.

The capitalists are always surprised when their system begins coming unstuck. But they are even more surprised when working people finally stand up and say “No!” The rulers fear the working class. But they have also been bred to treat us with the utmost class contempt. So when we revolt, it comes as a shock. They try to convince themselves, and to convince us, that it’s not really happening. Only three weeks before Dec. 31, 1958, a U.S. senator on a trip to Havana had boasted to the press, “Is there a revolution here? I hadn’t noticed any trouble.”

Trouble did hit that class in Cuba. The rebels not only toppled the hated, U.S.-backed dictatorship and put in power a government of workers and farmers. In face of escalating hostility from Washington—which included the failed mercenary invasion in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs carried out by the Kennedy administration—Cuban working people expropriated the capitalists and landlords, opening the socialist revolution and creating the first free territory in the Americas.

Illiteracy was abolished. Agrarian reform was sweeping, guaranteeing land to all peasants who worked it. Since then, not a single working farmer has been driven off his or her land. And the active involvement of workers and farmers in fundamental decisions affecting society has marked Cuba for 46 years.

Despite a relentless economic war by Washington ever since, the Cuban people have stood their ground. They have defended the revolution and lent internationalist assistance to millions from Africa to the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America fighting to end imperialist domination and achieve national liberation. The most recent such example is the more than 15,000 doctors, literacy teachers, sports trainers, agricultural special-

ists, and others from Cuba volunteering in Venezuela. They have offered their selfless services there for half a decade as working people in Venezuela have fought off repeated attempts by local businessmen and their U.S. sponsors to turn back the clock by toppling the elected government of that country.

It is this example that’s a mortal threat to the property interests and privileges of the U.S. rulers and their imperialist allies. This is even more so today as economic and social conditions worldwide resemble the financial bubbles, underlying capitalist stagnation, and sharpening trade conflicts that gave rise to the Great Depression of the 1930s and culminated in a world war.

Since the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, some left critics of the Cuban Revolution have bemoaned the increased economic hardships and social inequalities that the Cuban people have faced as evidence of the revolution’s weakness. In fact, the revolution has emerged stronger over the last 15 years.

A decisive component of workers and farmers in Cuba, and broadening layers of young people for whom new alternatives are being created, have developed more confidence, more creativity, and taken more initiative in dealing with the contradictions and problems they confront. They are less isolated from the class struggle throughout the capitalist world, including its political, cultural, and artistic expressions. A new generation of revolutionary leadership is being tested and gaining experience in the process, answering in practice the often asked question, “What will happen after Fidel?”

The five working-class heroes serving draconian sentences in U.S. prisons—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage for Havana are such products of the Cuban Revolution. Three of them, for example, fought in Angola in the late 1980s as volunteer combatants when Cuba helped that African nation defeat invasions by the South African regime’s apartheid army.

The Cuban Revolution won’t be copied. But it does show that working people—including in the United States and other imperialist countries—can forge a revolutionary leadership, take political power out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters, and join the worldwide struggle for a society based on human solidarity and the needs of the earth’s majority, not the dog-eat-dog reality and morality of the capitalism.

## Bombings of civilians in Najaf, Karbala

**Continued from front page**

indicate that the elections are likely to be held as scheduled on January 30. Meanwhile, Washington has stepped up its political pressure on the Syrian government, charging it with sheltering former officers of Hussein’s regime and becoming a conduit for funding the groups that have carried out kidnappings and beheadings of hostages and armed assaults on civilian and military targets.

On December 21 an attack by a suicide bomber in a U.S. military base near the northern city of Mosul killed 22, including 13 U.S. troops, according to U.S. officials. More than 70 were wounded. Media reports indicate that Ansar al-Sunna, a Sunni Muslim group, took responsibility for the attack, whose targets were U.S. and Iraqi troops, and non-Iraqi “contractors.”

These attacks, and the execution of three employees of Iraq’s Independent Electoral Commission on a busy street in Baghdad December 19, were aimed at disrupting the elections planned by the interim government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

No one has yet taken responsibility for the car bombings in Najaf and Karbala or issued statements explaining their purpose.

Those who carried out the bombings were aiming for the maximum number of civilian casualties among the Shiite population, which makes up about 60 percent of Iraq’s population of 25 million.

The destruction was greatest in the car bombing in Najaf, where 54 were killed and 142 injured, the Associated Press reported. The bomb went off during a funeral procession in a central square crowded with people in this city 100 miles south of the capital. “In Karbala, a suicide bomber detonated his vehicle amid minibuses at the entrance to the city’s bus terminal,” said a *New York Times* dispatch from Baghdad the next day. The director of a nearby hospital said 14 had been killed and 52 wounded.

Haidar al-Ubadi, a top official with the Dawa party, a key component of an alliance of leading Shiite-based parties, blamed Sunni forces from the Wahhabi branch of Islam for the attack. “The Wahhabis are being fed intelligence from the Baathists to carry out this slaughter,” al-Ubadi said. “We will hand them victory if we respond in kind.”

Another Shiite cleric, Muhammad Bahr al-Uloum, charged, “They are trying to ignite a sectarian civil war and prevent elections from going ahead on time.”

The Saddam Hussein regime had its main base of support among a wealthy layer of Sunni Arabs, who recognize that the January 30 elections could register a crowning blow

to their former domination. A new government brought into office with relatively little disruption of the election process would have greater authority among Iraqis and internationally than the one installed by U.S. imperialism more than a year after the March 2003 invasion.

The U.S. takeover of the city of Fallujah in November was a powerful military blow to Baathist groups and their allies. Following the brutal U.S.-led assault on Fallujah, more evidence has been made public of the central role played by remnants of the Hussein regime in organizing the attacks on U.S. forces and the Iraqi interim government.

Having lost their territorial base in Fallujah, the Baathist-led forces have tried to regroup in sections of Mosul and other former Baathist strongholds, and more and more are turning to desperate attacks on civilians. The isolation of these armed groups is also demonstrated by the fact that the two largest Sunni-based political parties have decided to participate in the elections, along with the parties with majority support within the Shiite population and the Kurdish groups in the north.

Washington has taken advantage of these kind of attacks to push ahead with the January 30 elections as the only “democratic” alternative for Iraqis, and increase the pressure on the Syrian regime to clamp down on Baathist forces operating from its territory.

At a December 20 press conference, U.S. president George Bush continued Washington’s threats against the government of Syrian president Bashar Al Assad for allegedly aiding Baathists who are “funneling money to the insurgents” in Iraq. “We have sent messages to the Syrians in the past, and we will continue to do so,” said Bush. “We have tools at our disposal, a variety of tools ranging from diplomatic tools to economic pressure. Nothing’s taken off the table. And when I said the other day that I expect these countries [Syria and Iran] to honor the political process in Iraq without meddling, I meant it.”

A year ago, the U.S. Congress passed the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act, which gives the president the authority to impose a range of sanctions against Damascus, from banning exports to Syria to freezing Syrian assets in the United States. The legislation demands that the Syrian government prevent armed groups opposed to the U.S. occupation of Iraq from entering its country; shut down the offices of Palestinian groups that Washington labels as “terrorist”; withdraw its troops from Lebanon; and halt any development of medium- and long-range missile systems.

# Why ‘Islamism’ peaked in 1979

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL  
AND MAURICE WILLIAMS

In a letter to the editor published in the December 14 issue, reader Geoff Mirelowitz asked for more explanation of a statement in the November 16 *Militant* that “Islamism” has peaked, that groups like Hamas and al-Qaeda are politically exhausted, and that the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca “was the high point of ‘Islamism’ while September 11 was its flare-out.” How is that statement reconciled with the fact that Hamas arose much later and “appears to have won broad support”?

Big-business commentators, echoed by some middle-class radicals, often assert that “Islamic fundamentalists are on the rise.” That is not accurate. Such groups, which are political—bourgeois—currents, not primarily religious ones, are generally on the decline and have been for some time. Their weakening is part of the broader political bankruptcy and exhaustion of bourgeois nationalist currents in the Mideast and elsewhere.

A number of such currents stood at the head of democratic and anti-imperialist struggles in the Mideast from the 1940s

## REPLY TO A READER

through the 1960s. The Free Officers movement founded by Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser, which led the fight against British colonial rule in Egypt, was one such example. These currents predominated because of the betrayal of the interests of workers and peasants by Communist Parties and other Stalinist forces, which maintained considerable influence in the Mideast through the 1980s.

The anti-imperialist advances won under these leaderships, like the nationalization of oil in the region and Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal, peaked by the 1960s. Subsequently, these gains led to further capitalist development and class differentiation in each of these countries. In “The Opening Guns of World War III,” the lead article in *New Internationalist* no. 7, Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes describes this process as “the product of the consolidation of a national bourgeoisie and substantial middle class, of internal modern class development and class polarization. These bourgeois regimes use their state power—including naked violence and aggression—to advance their class interests against rival regimes, as well as against the workers and peasants at home.”

Since the late 1960s, the growing failures and discrediting of secular bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists—what Barnes calls “the historical exhaustion of the nonproletarian currents” that had substituted for revolutionary leaderships there—fueled the temporary rise of Islamism. This variant of bourgeois nationalism peaked by the late 1970s.

The so-called Islamist currents, cloaking themselves in a religious mantle, won some mass support by adopting militant rhetoric. While at times in conflict with imperialism, they are not anti-imperialist, however. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of Algeria, for example, in challenging the country’s government in the early 1990s, promised to be less subservient to French imperialism. At the same time, it advocated “free market” economic policies and called for cooperation with imperialist governments to explore and expand Algeria’s natural resources and export potential.

The high point of Islamism was in the late 1970s. It was marked by the November 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, which rocked the Saudi kingdom for several years. Hundreds of rebels, led by Juhaiman al-Oteiby and with support among elements in the National Guard, seized the mosque. It took the regime two weeks to crush the revolt. The insurgents not only denounced the royal family for straying from the teachings of Islam. According to a report in the Jan. 21, 1980, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, they also accused the regime of “feeding the United States and Israel with our oil and more money” and demanded “the expulsion of the agents of the imperialist America.” The rebels also called for a republic to replace the monarchy.

For 10 days, protests broke out in Qatif and other oil-field cities on the Arab-Persian Gulf. Demonstrators shouted slogans in support of the Iranian Revolution and for a republic. The government sent in 2,000 National Guardsmen. In the ensuing clashes, by one estimate, 10 demonstrators were killed and hundreds wounded. Badly shaken, the Saudi monarchy beheaded 63 rebels in public squares spread out over eight cities to have the maximum intimidating effect.

In Egypt the exhaustion of the Nasser-led current put wind in the sails of self-described Muslim organizations. In 1981, Egyptian army members belonging to such a group assassinated President Anwar Sadat, whose government was widely despised for its rapprochement with Washington and Tel Aviv. And in Afghanistan and Pakistan, bourgeois groups waving the banner of Islam were part of the reactionary forces that waged war against the unpopular invasion of Afghanistan by Moscow.

In Iran, a gigantic popular revolution toppled the U.S.-backed monarchy in 1979. Because of the vacuum of working-class leadership, however, as the shah’s regime was overthrown through the mass mobilizations of workers and peasants, bourgeois forces led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini stepped in and took over the government. They falsely claimed the mantle of the revolution, using anti-imperialist rhetoric to win support.

Over the subsequent two decades, however, Islamist groups, like other bourgeois nationalist currents, have

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# ‘Release political prisoners in Haiti,’ says freed priest

BY ERIC SIMPSON

MIAMI—“I’m on a campaign to free political prisoners, and the other victims of arbitrary arrest, and to publicize the wretched conditions inside Haiti’s prisons,” Reverend Gérard Jean-Juste said at a meeting here December 7. “We in Haiti and abroad, we want freedom for all the political prisoners.”

Jean-Juste, an activist priest closely associated with deposed former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, returned to Miami for a brief visit after his release from prison. He walked out of his jail cell in Haiti November 29, 47 days after being arrested October 13. Charges against him were dismissed at a hearing November 12.

Aristide, currently in exile in South Africa, was forcibly expelled by U.S. Special Forces February 29 during a rightist takeover last year. Washington then installed Gerard Latortue, who was flown in from Florida after living in the United States for decades, as interim prime minister. Scores of Aristide supporters and former government officials have been imprisoned since the U.S.-backed coup.

“I am one set free. There are more than 700 more to go,” Jean-Juste told participants at the meeting of Veye Yo, a Haitian rights organization. He said he was convinced that half of the prisoners in Haiti’s jails were political, while most of the rest have been arrested arbitrarily—young men rounded up on suspicion of violent acts in support of Aristide.

Jean-Juste was well known in Miami as an advocate for the rights of Haitian immigrants. He served as director of the Haitian Refugee Center and founded Veye Yo, and led numerous protests for immigrant rights in the 1980s.

On the evening of his arrest in Haiti, 200 demonstrators gathered outside the headquarters of Veye Yo to demand his release. Other protests were organized later in Miami, while some 30 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to the State Department calling for the release

of Jean-Juste, former government officials, and other prominent supporters of Aristide.

Cops and masked men with automatic weapons seized Jean-Juste at the Sainte Claire Catholic Church in a working-class neighborhood in Port-au-Prince where he is the pastor. Hundreds of children had gathered to eat food provided by a U.S. charity foundation. Three of the children were shot and wounded while Jean-Juste was dragged through the window over broken glass during the arrest.

Jean-Juste said the arrest came shortly after he spoke with former president Aristide via cell phone. He was later charged with disturbing the peace, a violation punishable by a 40 cent fine.

He joked that he was treated relatively peacefully by the Haitian cops. “Imagine if I had been a young man in Brooklyn!” he told Veye Yo members, referring to the torture inflicted by New York City police on Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997.

According to the *Guardian* newspaper, Haitian justice minister Bernard Gousse told a news conference that Jean-Juste was arrested because he “was sheltering people” who were “perpetrators of barbaric acts.”

Interim prime minister Gerard Latortue alleged that Jean-Juste and other priests, as well as leaders of Aristide’s party, Lavalas, have been organizing against the interim government installed by Washington, the *Miami Herald* reported. “They want to cut off my head and kill two or three ministers,” said Latortue. “They see Jean-Juste as their leader. A battle is being fought on behalf of Aristide against the government.”

Jean-Juste described his time in prison to the Veye Yo members, explaining the horrible sanitary conditions, widespread sexual abuse, and violence against inmates. He denounced the brutality meted out by prison authorities, explaining how one day he counted 14 head injuries inflicted by the guards. “A prisoner without money can starve to death in prison; but

so can a prisoner who has money,” he told the group of Haitian workers.

Some of the inmates he saw included former prime minister Yvon Neptune, numerous elected officials, former government employees, Lavalas party leaders, judges, and lawyers.

In an interview with radio station KPFA shortly before his trip to Miami, he described one cell where he was held with 12 others as “first class” with beds and a shower. In another cell 18 inmates were crammed together who shared a bucket for a toilet and slept on the floor. Under these conditions, one cellmate died due to lack of medical attention.

Jean-Juste said at the Miami meeting that two days after his release from the Carrefour jail cops opened fire on prisoners at the National Penitentiary. The police claimed seven were killed in gang violence in the jail. Jean-Juste stated that he has reports of 100 deaths at the hands of guards. An account from a prisoner who was there published by the Haitian Press Agency on December 10 estimates 60 prisoners were killed.

“Aristide is still the president of Haiti until February 7, 2006. He is my president,” Jean-Juste told supporters in Miami. “He was kidnapped on February 29, 2004, and he’s been replaced by an illegal, unconstitutional de facto government.”



Militant/Eric Simpson

**Gérard Jean-Juste speaks at December 7 meeting at Veye Yo in Miami a week after his release from prison in Haiti.**

## Abbas: ‘end intifada’

Continued from Page 7

sea” and establishing an “Islamic state” in Palestine—claimed the mantle of the armed struggle, focusing on suicide bombings and targeting mostly civilians in Israel.

This course of action and the increasing isolation of these groups have made them the main target of Israel’s offensive, which is directed at any Palestinian who dares resist the occupation. Since 2002, Tel Aviv has dealt crippling blows to those who took up arms against the Israeli occupation, including assassinations of many leaders of Hamas. At the height of the conflict in 2002, two Palestinians died for every Israeli who was killed. Today that ratio is five to one.

In his speech at Herzliya, Sharon said Israel has made headway in winning legitimacy for this crackdown on Palestinian resistance, which it has carried out under the banner of fighting the “war on terrorism.”

“In 2005 we have the opportunity to establish a new partnership with the international community in the struggle against terror and regional and global instability,” Sharon said. “The world, and especially Europe, has learned to understand what we have faced for many years.”

“Israel and the moderate Arab states, as well as the entire world, share a common interest to support regional stability, stop terror, and defeat extremism which threatens the entire world,” he said.

Sharon called for further isolation and pressure on the governments of Iran and Syria. Tehran, he said, “is publicly calling for the elimination of the State of Israel, and continues in its efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction.” The Syrian regime, he added, “supports dangerous terror organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, and acts to thwart the United States’ efforts to bring democracy and genuine reforms to the Middle East.”

## Attendance at Guadalajara book fair sets record

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bookstore representatives, books distributors, and librarians of the hundreds of titles in English, Spanish, French, and other languages listed in the publisher’s catalog and on its web site, [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com).

The fair also included dozens of panel discussions, book launchings, and workshops. These included a panel on *Como ves? El aborto* (Abortion, How Do You See It?) by Gabriela Rodríguez Ramírez, a member of Planned Parenthood International. This new book contains information on methods of birth control and abortion.

Abortion is not legal in Mexico except in cases of rape or to save the life of the woman. Supporters of decriminalization of abortion were gratified that at last the issue was being taken up openly at the fair. “It is a class question,” said one of the panelists, Juan Manuel Valero. “There are women who are Catholic who don’t die from abortions because they have money to pay, while thousands who can’t afford a safe abortion die.”

*Como ves? El aborto* states that 17 percent of pregnancies end in abortion, a procedure often performed in Latin America under unsafe and painful conditions. An estimated 1,500 women die each year in Mexico from illegal abortions and 100,000 are hospitalized.

Betsey Stone, one of the volunteers at the Pathfinder booth who participated in the struggle to decriminalize abortion in the United States, pointed out during the discussion that the struggle to establish a woman’s right to choose abortion is a fundamental part of the fight for women’s equality. “If you don’t have control over your own body, over whether or when to have children, you cannot be equal in any area, including on the job,” Stone said. Attacks on the right to choose in the United States today are part of broader attacks on the working class, she said, with employers seeking to bring

down the wages and working conditions of all workers.

Sales of books on the fight for women’s equality were high at the Pathfinder booth. Erlinda Loera, an adult education teacher who bought *Marianas in Combat*, *Abortion Is a Woman’s Right*, and several books by Bolshevik leaders Leon Trotsky and V.I. Lenin, said that with more women joining the workforce she sees significant advances by Mexican women today. Loera said she traveled 10 hours on a bus to visit the Pathfinder booth.

A discussion of *Images and Symbols of ‘68*, a new book by Arnulfo Aquino and Jorgé Pérez Vega about the Oct. 2, 1968, Tlatelolco massacre of hundreds of student demonstrators in Mexico City by the army and police, attracted 70 mostly young people. The student movement of 1968 culminated in a national student strike and mobilized thousands of students in demonstrations demanding social justice and an end to police brutality and repression of political activity.

Many of the photographs published in the book were released from government archives closed to the public up until recently. Other pictures have been held by individuals who felt intimidated from making them public because the photos confirm the responsibility of police, army, and government officials for the massacre.

During the fair protesters gathered outside the exposition center with signs demanding freedom for prisoners who were arrested during and after a May 28, 2004, protest at the summit of heads of governments of Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union held in Guadalajara.

The protest coincided with the release of a report by Amnesty International calling for an investigation into the May 28 arrests of more than 100 people, including the beating of many. “The way in which many of the arrests were made, the treatment received by

those arrested, the complaints of torture and ill-treatment and the lack of an independent investigation brings into doubt the criminal proceedings being implemented,” the statement said.

Pathfinder volunteers at the fair encountered two protests in downtown Guadalajara by farmers hard hit by low prices for their products and seizures of their land by banks and other financial institutions.

On December 6 a group of 100 farmers and their supporters, organized by the Central Campesina Cardenista, closed down the building housing the state congress. Holding corn stalks and picket signs calling for “fair prices for farmers” and “land for those who work and produce,” the farmers demanded that the Jalisco state government comply with existing agreements to turn over to peasants more than 75,000 acres of land.

## — LETTERS —

### Torture is wrong

It is time for the government to come out against torture. There was a time when the “rules of war” allowed victorious soldiers the right to enslave, rape, pillage, and plunder. I assume our government is against these war crimes, but they consider torture a gray area.

If the U.S. government won’t promise not to participate in, or turn a blind eye to torture, then the American people should.

Torture has always been and will always be wrong. Don’t you agree?

Chuck Mann  
Greensboro, North Carolina

### Famine for profit

The *New York Times* recently pointed out that world hunger is rising. At least 5 million children starve to death every

year, and 852 million people are chronically hungry—a figure that is rising. Meanwhile, the Democrats and Republicans in this country demand more money—for war and “homeland security”—to make sure things stay just the way they are.

What the *Times* neglected to point out is that world grain production in 2004 is expected to reach an historic record.

Famine for profit—capitalism at its finest!

Robert Dees  
Palo Alto, California

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.**

**Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**



# Indonesia: U.S. company dumped toxins

## Jakarta to prosecute Newmont Mining, world's largest gold mining boss

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The Indonesian government has accused U.S.-based Newmont Mining Corporation, the world's largest gold mining company, of "purposely disposing hazardous and poisonous material" into Buyat Bay, northern Sulawesi. A spokesperson for the attorney general of Indonesia announced December 1 that the mining giant will be charged with dumping dangerous amounts of arsenic and mercury directly into the sea from 1996 until August 2004, when the mine closed.

The announcement follows a sustained campaign by fishermen and other residents of the bay to hold Newmont accountable for its waste disposal practices. In the last year they have held meetings, collaborated with environmental activists, and sent at least one delegation to Jakarta, the capital, which is located on Java—like Sulawesi, one of the largest islands that make up Indonesia.

Company executives have insisted that the pollutants are at safe levels and have not entered the food chain.

Villagers have initiated their own \$543 million lawsuit against Newmont, reported the Associated Press in November. "We can feel there is something wrong in our bodies," Jemi Bawole, 36, told AP. "Newmont has to be held responsible."

"Before Newmont came, we only got colds and malaria," said Nurbaya Patenda, 27. "Now we suffer weird diseases. Even the doctors are confused."

During a December 2 stop in Jakarta, U.S. Treasury assistant secretary Randal Quarles expressed concern about the government's lawsuit, telling reporters that "these sorts of issues are deterring investment in Indonesia." Quarles visited Indonesia to meet with government ministers and the head of the Bank of Indonesia.

If found guilty, company executives could face jail terms of up to 15 years, fines of around \$85,000, and "confiscation of any profit," said the November 25 *Jakarta Post*. In September Indonesian police held and questioned a number of Newmont representatives for several weeks.

The government is basing its prosecution on a report by a "joint team of government officials, activists and police," said the *Post*.



Indonesians at meeting in Buyat Bay village (above) discuss diseases and environmental contamination caused by dangerous amounts of arsenic and mercury dumped into bay from 1996 to 2004 by U.S.-based Newmont Mining Corporation.



It added that the survey concluded "that the bay was indeed polluted with excessive levels of arsenic and mercury."

Alwi Shihab, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, told a November 24 press conference, "The bay is contaminated with arsenic, but we will leave it to the courts to determine the level of pollution." The courts would also determine who is responsible, he said—a reference to claims by Newmont executives that "illegal miners" had dumped poisonous tailings into the bay, bumping up the test readings of mercury and arsenic.

### Gov't says 'eat less fish'

At the same time, the report said that the water quality met official Indonesian standards and advised locals to eat less fish and avoid local wells. "The government told us not to drink the water in our village, but there is no other source of water here," said

Buyat resident Anwar, speaking before the Regional Representatives Council in Jakarta on December 2. "The local administration has also terminated its water aid," he said.

Anwar said that "dozens of women in Buyat Bay village had developed anal and vaginal hemorrhage," reported the *Post*. "Doctors there did not recognize the condition," he said, "and we don't have any money to go to the hospital, because the local administration has stopped providing medical assistance." AP noted that nearby Buyat Pantai is "one of the poorest villages in the isolated region, [with] a single dirt road running through it and no electricity or running water." Villagers have demanded that they be settled elsewhere.

Newmont lawyer Luhut Pangaribuan told the *Post* that the firm stuck to its position that "the metals in the bay's water and fish are within the safety levels and are therefore fit for consumption." Company executives

have said that the government had OK'd their proposal to pour waste into the bay through a submerged pipeline.

AP noted that the practice "would violate clean water standards" in the United States and Canada, and added, "The controversy could spill over to Newmont's other larger gold mine on the island of Sumbawa, where villagers earlier held demonstrations over demands for jobs and compensation for lost land."

Using the same waste disposal system as the Buyat Bay operation, the Sumbawa mine is forecast to deposit around half a billion tons of tailings in the ocean over the next 10 years.

The Sumbawa mine produces both copper and gold, like the mining operation of

New Orleans-based Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold Inc. on West Papua, established in 1967 in an agreement with the then-newly installed Suharto dictatorship. Protests about environmental destruction by the mining company have been a component of the campaign for independence on West Papua.

Such mining operations are a key part of the Indonesian economy. Sales of minerals and related products account for close to one-fifth of the country's export earnings, with gold being most valuable of all. The resource-rich country is also a producer of bauxite, phosphate, iron, and nickel, and is the world's second largest producer of tin, and third largest producer of coal and copper.

While giant companies like Freeport and Newmont dominate the export scene, many mining operations are small-scale and frequently function outside regulation. In a 2001 study by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, geologist Clive Aspinall estimated that in northern Sulawesi alone up to 3,000 workers were employed in this kind of gold mining. Their work included the manual crushing of ore, for which they received up to 400,000 rupiah a month, equivalent to less than \$50.

### White House approval

Meanwhile, officials from both the U.S. and Australian governments have expressed satisfaction with the drive by the new government in Jakarta to align itself with the imperialist-led "war on terror."

Speaking to the United States-Indonesia Society in Washington, D.C., November 30, U.S. deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz said the recent elections were a "huge accomplishment." He added that "the Indonesian people gave a very strong mandate to their new president for reform... and a very clear mandate against religious extremism."

Wolfowitz, who served a term as ambassador to Indonesia during the U.S.-backed Suharto dictatorship, congratulated the Indonesian military for having "done a lot to contribute in a positive way to the success of democracy." In the week following Wolfowitz's remarks, Australia's foreign minister Alexander Downer officiated at a conference of religious leaders in Jakarta. "A terrible perversion of religion, with a violent face, threatens moderate believers and moderate states in both the East and the West," Downer said at the opening ceremony.

In his keynote address, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said that "terrorism today must be regarded as the enemy of all religions. In the end the forces of light, reason and hope must overpower the forces of darkness, despair and violence." His government has continued the hunt for those alleged to have carried out several bombings in Indonesia, including the 2002 attacks in Bali that took 202 lives. In November it launched the trial of Abu Bakar Bashir, accused of links to Jemaah Islamiyah, which prosecutors claim is linked to al-Qaeda.

Bashir has denied any involvement in the attacks.

# Algerian asylum seeker freed in New Zealand

BY TERRY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—In a setback for the Labour Party government, the Supreme Court December 9 granted bail to Ahmed Zaoui, an Algerian citizen seeking asylum here. The government had jailed him for two years without charges. A condition of the court's ruling was that Zaoui live at the Dominican Priory, a Catholic religious house in Auckland.

Five days before the court's decision more than 200 people rallied outside Auckland Central Remand prison to demand Zaoui's release. Speakers at the rally included rep-

resentatives from trade unions, immigrant groups, church organizations, and prominent artists and musicians. When other inmates at the prison saw television coverage of the protest, they began chanting, "Free Zaoui now!" from their cells. This and other actions around the country demonstrated growing public support for Zaoui, whose case has become, in the words of the *New Zealand Herald*, a "cause celebre."

Zaoui was elected to Algeria's parliament in 1991 as a member of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), until the Algerian military staged a coup and his party was outlawed. He arrived in New Zealand in December 2002 and claimed refugee status.

The Refugee Status Appeals Authority (RSAA) granted him asylum in August 2003, but the government refused to release him, citing a "Security Risk Certificate" issued by the Security Intelligence Service (SIS), the secret police. This is the first use of such a document, created by 1999 legislation that increased the powers of the immigration police. The certificates allow the detention and deportation of immigrants based on secret evidence.

Government officials claim that Zaoui poses a possible "threat to national security." They have attempted to link him to the Islamic Armed Group (GIA), a split-off from the armed wing of the FIS that they brand "terrorist." In a television interview screened on the day of his release, Zaoui branded such claims "a fairytale," and challenged the government to make public any information it held on him.

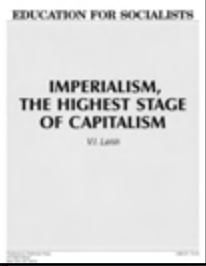
Zaoui still faces deportation, depending on the outcome of a review of the certificate, to be conducted by the inspector general of the SIS. The government is appealing an earlier court decision that Zaoui's human rights must be taken into account as a part of this review.

At the Supreme Court hearing, the government opposed granting Zaoui bail, but reversed its earlier stance by announcing it would not oppose his transfer to the Mangere Refugee and Resettlement Centre. Chief Justice Sian Elias rejected this, saying it would have been a continuation of Zaoui's detention.

In an editorial, the *New Zealand Herald* called the Supreme Court's decision to grant Zaoui bail "a snubbing" of the government that had put it in "an embarrassing position." The court, the *Herald's* editors opined, "has gone a sizeable step too far."

The Supreme Court only came into existence this year, replacing the Privy Council in London as New Zealand's final court of appeal. The government claimed the new court would add to the legitimacy of the legal system. In a speech before its first sitting in July, Attorney General Margaret Wilson said, "At long last New Zealanders can take ownership and responsibility for all aspects of our justice system." But the court's first few months of operation have been marked by controversy. Some capitalist politicians have expressed concerns that politically appointed judges might give the court a liberal bias or diminish its authority.

## Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism



by V.I. Lenin

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